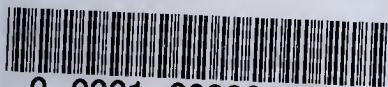


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LETTERS
ON THE
FEMALE MIND,
ITS POWERS

AND

PURSUITS.

ADDRESSED TO

MISS H. M. WILLIAMS,

With particular reference to

HER LETTERS FROM FRANCE.

VOBIS PARTA QUIES—

VIRE.

LONDON:

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1793.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Chil-2
I PASS over the portraits you give, my dear madam, of some of the members of the National Assembly, and supposing the merits and demerits you attribute to their principles and their practice to be well founded, applaud and condemn with you. I am tempted a little out of the path I was pursuing, by your advertising to the debate on the suppression of monasteries. What your sentiments on the subject are, I do not collect from the page before me, nor remember to have

VOL. II.

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seen stated in your work : you will excuse me therefore, if, through ignorance or inadvertency, I run counter to your tacit or declared opinion without apology.

There is hardly any popular topic on which I should be more at a loss to infer the opinion of any serious person from the general tenor of their sentiments, than the question, Whether religious seclusion is to be regarded as a blessing or a punishment? whether it is best, promoted or suppressed? The interests of society seem against it ; but whether that of individuals does not require at least its *toleration*, has, I think, in the fury of despotic abrogation, and the insane licence of a tyrannical mob, never yet been fairly determined ; nor can we gain much light on the subject from experience : the destruction of convents having, by some fraternities, been welcomed as release, by others deplored as exile.

Like all other human institutions, the monastic life may be rendered, through misapplication, decidedly noxious to society, and detrimental to the interests it is immediately calculated to promote ; but we are not to argue on the merit of any thing from the abuse of it ; and that it has been the comfortable refuge of disappointment or distress, that it has fixed the wavering in the path that leads to peace, and that it has ultimately saved the wretched from despair, I hope is not too much to attribute to a practice that has at least the prescription of ages in its favor.

It is condemned as cowardice to fly the temptations or the troubles of life. We are said to desert our duty when we shelter ourselves from its dangers. I grant it ; but I contend that there are few instances where *our own* worldly concerns *alone* are involved, in which caution is not superior to valor, and that true greatness of mind is as fully evinced,

in some cases, by receding as by pressing forward.

The arguments for and against religious retirement, are very different when applied to the two sexes. Few men are so detached from the world as to have a right to withdraw their aid from it, till age or accident has deprived them of activity; yet surely it is cruel to shut the door against all, when the religion they profess recommends their taking shelter in the bosom of holiness.—Superstition, however contemned amongst us, I cannot look on as a sin unpardonable in the sight of Heaven: the mind it has once seized is enervated to a degree that renders it unfit for human intercourse: it can acquire nothing good to itself, and it may do mischief to others. As therefore I would make a bridge for a flying enemy, I would have some place of refuge open to the superstitious, where he might be at peace, and leave me at peace.

The

The helplessness of decrepitude seeks in vain the mitigation of its woes from persons attached by none of the social principles. How often have I seen a tottering old man, who perhaps had just the means of sole subsistence, waiting for the clamor of a shop to subside that his inarticulate want might be heard. I have watched him depart with the morsel for his dinner he could scarcely balance on the skewer, or the loaf he had hardly strength to grasp; heedfully circumspect, lest, in his vermicular path, he should encounter any one who might, by the slightest collision, deposit him and his purchase in the kennel. I have then said to myself, why is there not an asylum in this country, where infirm age might find a ready supply of its wants?

There are numberless cases in female life, in all ranks, and at all ages, where a retreat from the world would be highly
B 3 salutary.

salutary. The evils to which unprotected women are exposed, are various and innumerable: unless they assume qualities not at all consonant with the feminine character, and which rob it of half its grace, they are in their property, if not in their principles, the dupes of designing people, or of their own inexperience: irritability of frame gives every evil double force, or supineness renders it irremediable: harassed by what they have not strength of mind to surmount, or misled by passion they have not been taught to conquer, the world frets them, and then blames the temper for what is a fault of constitution, brought out, like obscured colour on the canvas, by particular circumstances. For such surely the tranquillity of a convent is to be wished: to such it surely would, conducted on certain principles, be a most comfortable retreat.

To

To renounce the world, has been deemed to give the greatest, the most indubitable evidence of a great mind. I cannot think it such. It may be a great, it may be a galling sacrifice to those who are taking their first draught of its pleasures; but a few disappointments, a few difficulties, the loss of one friend, the rubs of society, or even the very nature of all enjoyment, in a short time dissolves all its fascinations: it can deceive only the unwary; it can allure only strangers, and the sentiment that uniformly succeeds any wound given to our minds is a wish to retire from it. Perhaps it would be wrong, ninety-nine times in an hundred, that our prayers should be listened to, or our wishes accomplished; but surely it is unpleasant to consider, that it is in all cases a desire that cannot be gratified. Every one, able or unable, is, by the continental spirit of ejection, forced upon the world; all must struggle though

ture of falling; and all must forego the privilege of cultivating in quiet, what the religion they have imbibed with their first nutriment recommends, and which possibly was the only mode of cultivation under which the virtue of a weak mind could thrive. I never saw a tree felled without feeling its groans; the deracination of a forest I look on as a species of moral sacrilege; and I own I cannot regard with pleasanter sensations the effects of that opinion which confounded religion and hypocrisy, abstinence and sensuality; and turned the professors of each on a wide world, where evil propensities stood no chance of correction, and where the virtue of half a life might be annihilated in a moment.

I will confess to you, my dear madam, that in my feelings on this subject, my passions in some measure blend themselves with my reason, though I hope the latter, as it has ever dictated the same opinion,



had chosen a secluded life, and made a due use of it, had been suffered to remain in it, and that in some obscure nook of every empire, such as had sincerely desired to secure their best interests in retreat might have found a well regulated convent to receive them.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Oct. 1792.

WITHOUT entering at all into the discussion of the affairs of France, of which it is now easier to see the drift than the conclusion, I may observe, my dear madam, that to my apprehension this stupendous revolution has been divided into three epochs. Those who were the prime movers in the business, and who had my best wishes, as the temperate promoters of a limited, in preference to an absolute monarchy, by the existence of their power formed one era: they were succeeded by a more violent set of reformers, whose reign has lasted till within a few months; this, I call the second era: we are now in the third, which, I think, may be called the millenium.

millenium of the mob. I believe it was in the second of these periods that you visited France, and, consequently, that the then rulers were the objects of your admiration. You speak of them as proving their knowledge of the human heart by addressing themselves to the passions; and I grant you justified in your observation by the whole force of modern reasoning.

You say that these French patriots know the human heart, because they interest the passions. I admit it, if the effect they mean to work is temporary and of short duration; but if what they are to accomplish is to be substantial; if it is a steady system of legislation that they are forming for the service of posterity, not a commotion they are exciting for the furtherance of their own private views, they are yet to learn the texture of the human heart. All passions, like the electrical fluid, will rouse, will animate, will give strength; but
what

what follows it? Either languor and debility, or another species of animation consequent on disappointment, and which will direct every effort of the deluded patient against the operator. If you will refer to the date of this letter, you will, I believe, confess that the consequence has already saved me the trouble of adducing further proof.—Our dispatches this day from Paris, give us that debate, in which one of the leaders in the second phalanx has been accused by an order of citizens, too low for me to name, of aiming at a dictatorship.

Had you lived, my dear madam, in a less philosophising age than the present, your opinions, which I am happy in repeating are frequently evidences of the most generous temper, would, without losing aught of their grace, have been very different. You would then have listened to any one who had taken the other side of the argument, and insisted, that those were best acquainted with the
human

uman heart, who set the passions aside, while they addressed it ; because, as all passion is effervescence, it cannot be depended on for its continuance, and is to be dreaded in its effects ; whereas, the reason once gained, however difficult the victory, and tardy the surrender, conviction is established on a basis of truth ; the nature of things bears witness in our favour ; the perception of good and evil proves us correct ; and we can depend on what we have acquired.

Nothing appears to me to prove this more clearly, than a comparison of our Reformation and the Revolution of 1688. I speak only on the authority of the best historians, not with the smallest reference to, what I am ignorant in, politics. Whatever might be the secret motives of such a man as our Henry the eighth, the whole of his conduct previous to, and in the progress of, the reformation, seems to have been the result of no great wisdom or good temper.

per. It was an appeal to the most dreadful of all the human passions ; it was the exercitation of a spirit borrowed from the furies, that changed the national faith of this country : the new opinion fluctuated with its foundation, and in a few years was nearly overpowered ; so nearly, that I suppose no one will deny, that, had the successor of Mary been of Mary's church, England would have relapsed into Mary's religion, and have forgotten that any other had ever prevailed. The firmness of unamiable Elizabeth, which never courted the passions, though it often roused them, renovated, and established cumbent protestantism. Its rival, however, remembered how violently she had been stripped of the purple and tiara, and well knowing how her successor had been originally brought in, watched a favourable opportunity, at least, to shake her seat ; and, if half is to be believed that is delivered down to us,

us, of the designs of the last male Stuart, she had ground to hope.

That convulsion of government, which we style the Revolution, was an appeal to the common sense of the kingdom, and a remedy for its diseases, which, if all people did not instantly comprehend, was no sooner understood than welcomed: it was cool, it was permanent; and lending its aid to the trembling genius of religion, it seated her with itself on the throne.

To diverge a little from my subject, let me observe for a moment on the strange, the imperceptible, yet total subversion of public opinion within a few years. I remember, and it is not long since, when I used to dread the anniversary of king William's landing, on account of the turbulent spirit the commemoration of it seemed to excite; and I have, as jealous of the peace we enjoyed, most charitably wished his grace of Leinster in the Liffy, when he
has

has hazarded a tumult in Dublin, by parading round the whig-hero's statue.—Who praises William, who blesses the Revolution now?—The answer to this query, I suppose, is that which applies to every one, 'We are an enlightened people.' I wish you joy; but I have occasionally sat in a room so light, that I could not see.

There is a passage in your page now before me, that serves me as a clue to your sentiments on this last new re-re-revolution in France. You cannot approve it, I am convinced, because you speak of five hundred young ladies forming a procession, in which they led released prisoners in silken cords. What would a Parisian spirit feel now at the idea even of a *silken* cord that violates his liberty, or at the more revolting idea of any one holding the other end of it. The very notion is subversive of equality; it raises the distinction of superior and inferior, of first and last, leader and follower, &c.

&c. &c. between the holder and the held—'tis downright aristocracy.

What then shall I say, how shall I defend your principles, my dear madam, from a worse charge, that of favoring tyranny, if you ascribe efficacy to a pretty face? Where is there a greater, a more wayward despot than beauty? Where lies the appeal from its power? Where is the spirit its arts cannot subdue? What is the philosophy that withstands it? What the amulet that robs it of its influence?—'Tis dangerous!—'tis tyrannical—will a vote of the National Convention expel it? I fear not—the only remedy then is, to make it death to the person convicted of it. Inflamed with the zeal of democracy, how will the Parisian ladies vie with each other in their race to the scaffold, or the *lanterne*? How will the Venus and the Hebe of our polite circles deplore the cruelty of Fortune, when she dropped them on this pusillanimous island, rather than on the bold shore of Gaul.

L E T T E R III.

THE exordium to the ninth letter of your first volume, flatters me, my dear madam, with the hope, that however you or I may be led away by our feelings, our cool opinions on some topics are nearly the same, and, that notwithstanding the enthusiasm with which you enter into the discussion of state measures and mistakes, you are as averse to the assumption of politics into the list of female accomplishments, as I am. You seem aware that you will be deemed to have returned to your own country a fierce republican; but I am certain, had you considered the mischiefs that might ensue to a monarchical government, where all are at liberty to be hap-

PY.

py, from the dissemination of principles that tend to dissolve every link of subordination, and to infuse a spirit of discontent, you would cautiously have confined your sentiments to the boundary of your own heart, or at most have propagated them only in your colloquial intercourse with society.

What would you think of any one who should go into the nursery of one of your friends, perhaps such a friend as you loved for the most amiable qualities, and revered for the best intellectual endowments, and should preach to half a dozen-high spirited children the rights of mankind, the tyranny of power, the abjectness of subjection, and the advantages resulting from resistance. Suppose the elder of these auditors replied, "We have good and kind parents, and are content." This answer modern philosophy forbids to be admitted as argument; for it is only plain matter of fact. The promulgator of the new doctrine, if
it

it cannot be attacked in the right line of contradiction, adopts the truly serpentine obliquity of fashionable reasoning; plausibility, pertinacity and promises carry the point, and the parental authority is voted down. Would any body say, this endeavour was the operation of a mind fit either to preside or to assist in any community? Should we not call it cruelty in the extreme both to parents and children? And could we believe that so unprincipled an assault could be made on domestic peace, unless it was prompted by greediness of some kind or other? What do we think of servants who instil into infant bosoms notions of their own importance, and a contempt of authority, but that they have in view their own emolument, or that of the class in general to which they belong? I am sure Miss Williams shudders at the idea.

I have proscribed the unfair mode of controverting any of your opinions or
be-

benevolent prophecies, by calling your attention to the present state of affairs in France. I confess that it was impossible for you or myself to have foreseen such dreadful events as have disgraced human nature in that country : I therefore will not ask you whether you still think England is jealous of Gallic liberty, or angry at being surpassed in her offerings to the goddesses; but I will confine myself to these simple questions : Can we trust to our enthusiasm for performing the offices of prudence ? Is all to be risked for the chance that something may be gained ? A resolution on such principles is downright gambling, or I am grossly deceived.

The Parisian children, you tell us, inflamed with the *cacoethes pugnandi*, paraded the streets in martial array. I will allow you to have smiled with the most innocent pleasure at the sight ; for at that time the world had not, I believe, produced an instance of a posse of children,

dren, whose leaders had not seen their fifteenth year, absolutely murdering a fellow creature ! But this, I am confidently told, has recently been the case—the young blood-hounds, still objects of pity, were encouraged and commended by their parents. Is this human nature ? My head will not bear the contemplation. Can the sympathetic pleader in behalf of Peruvian misery justify it ? It cannot be. Let us quit the subject ; and let me detach my thoughts from it by asking you, my dear madam, what are the *honors* you allude to, as part of the *soulagement* you promise your amiable friend *Monf. du F.*

Your making use of such a term of distinction is to me another comfortable proof that you cannot wish success to the present anarchy of your favorite country ; for all honors are, I think, now effectually obliterated, and their very essence is inimical to the new system ; but so natural are the ideas of top and bottom,

bottom, first and last, upper and lower, that these disciples of confusion are perpetually moving for their admission in some oblique way or other. To point out how this principle has recently shewn itself, would be to transgress the limits I prescribe myself, and to dip farther into their councils than I ever wish to do.

Though supposed faults are most frequently the objects of critical attention, and we are more prone to shew our sagacity in censure than in commendation, I should excuse myself of the grossest injustice as well as stupidity, if I did not join the world in admiring your abilities and your exercise of them, or if I forbear to say that you have purchased a right to differ from me as often as you please, by the expression of your sentiments on seeing the picture of La Valiere, in the convent of Carmelites. In this page it is not the devotee of any sect or opinion that repeats the taught-lesson of the world:

world. It is charming Helen Williams who speaks what I shall ever listen to with pleasure, the genuine language of her own glowing heart. Describe sorrow, paint happiness, plead for frailty, or vindicate the virtues; and I will be your reader. But do not, I beseech you, endanger your temper, or the delicate texture of your talents, by employing your thoughts on subjects which, in the eye of genius, must be deemed vulgar. Do not degrade yourself by becoming the champion of those who, *incerta pro certis, bellum quam pacem malebant.*

L E T T E R IV.

I FEAR it is a repetition to remark, that you, my dear madam, seem to possess a quantity of sympathy and pity that is too short to include the once royal sufferers by the Paris revolution; and yet I cannot but think, however they may have erred, their distresses, even in the summer 1790, claim a tear from the eye of gentleness. I do not know that the consciousness of desert is any considerable alleviation of suffering, or that the unenviable privilege of having been born to a kingdom, exempts any man from the pains of existence. As little am I inclined to suppose it exonerates his fellow-creatures from the exercise of the Christian duties towards him; but (the
bishop

bishop of D. will forgive me for using his words,) if the *moral scene* is gone, what is it shall restrain the brutality of human nature?

Can Miss Williams, while she deploras the sufferings of La Valiere, while she arrays her to her imagination as beautiful, as frail, as fallen, and a woman——can she forget, that could her work reach the prison of the Bourbons, she is insulting, by poignant reflections, the sorrows of a giddy, perhaps a culpable, but certainly a wretched woman, one whose fall is at least made more severe, if it is more just, by the height she has descended from. Because Louis was a king, is he now sunk below the level of mankind? Because Marie Antionette was a queen, and at one time the idol of every heart in Europe, is she, by these decayed honors, protected from the wants and miseries of the most abject distress? Are there not calamities in suffering, by which we feel the culprit to have made

- atonement to the world? Is reasoning, is philosophy necessary to teach us to be tender to a prostrate enemy?

No one at all acquainted with the history of our country is less an advocate than I am, in favor of our Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles the first. I am persuaded, and she herself confessed it, when misfortunes had humbled her, that to her this kingdom was indebted for much of the mischief that marked our annals, from 1641, till the re-establishment of monarchy and peace. She was a woman of a busy and a turbulent spirit, which she inherited from her mother. The Medicean heroines are not favourites with me; but I blame this descendant from them particularly, because she did not consider, that when she crossed the channel, she left the continent where intrigue and tyranny had usurped the reins of government, and came to a land where there existed a law as binding on the governor as on the governed.

verned. She cost the kingdom the blood of some of its best subjects ; she raised a spirit of discord that she could never allay ; she brought her husband to the block, one of her daughters to an early grave, and herself, and the remnant of the family, to ruin ; and yet I never could contemplate Henrietta in the Louvre, subsisting, scantily subsisting, on the grudged kindness of unkind relations, and excusing to an English nobleman the absence of her daughter, by alledging that she was confined to her bed by the severity of the season and want of fire ; without feeling the tenderest compassion for her, without reflecting that however she had erred, this sufferer had been a queen, and was a woman !

I am no advocate for the royal family of France, or of any country. I plead only for candor towards them and all the world. Surely it will not, at the final adjustment of our accounts, be admitted as any substantial apology for barbarity,

that it was exercised only towards royalty, as if a crown made the *quondam* wearer of it game for any mob, and, in the very act of suffering injury, exculpated those who inflicted it. But you will say, that the affairs of France were not, at the time I advert to, in their present desperate situation. I grant it; but I contend, that even then, the fate of the king and queen might have been, without the gift of prophesy, foretold, and that in the opprobrious language with which they were forced to quit Versailles, there were daggers that wanted only security to have struck at that very time.

Had I been you, my dear madam, I would not have asserted, without supporting it by authority, that the dauphin *had been previously taught* how to interest the compassion of the multitude. I do not think you could certainly know the fact: the gestures, the words he made use of,
were

were not at all unnatural; and I would rather have given the little miscreant credit, for no more sublime a virtue, than that of being terrified at his mother's danger, especially as you afterwards condescend to record one of his ingenious sayings, which, to tell you the truth, would have given me a much less favorable opinion of his simplicity.

LETTER

LETTER V.

YOU again, my dear Madam, like an agreeable travelling companion, tempt me out of my way, to consider subjects not quite connected with those I set out in quest of; but you are so pleasant that I grudge no compliance; and as, however intrusted, and consequently warm I may sometimes appear, I mean rather to chat with you than to criticize—I care little for method.

You admire the character of Henry the fourth, *notwithstanding* he was a King—so do I, and perhaps a little more *because* he was a King; for in my opinion, it would have been pity that princely virtues should not have had a princely orbit to move in; but you draw

draw a comparison favorable, I confess, to my favorite, between Henry and such characters as the Alexanders and the Frederics. It is common, it is laudable, it is prudent to extol the virtues of civilization, and oppose to them the ferocious vices of barbarism; but yet there is a degree of praise attributable to the least refined merit, and there is justice to which I know no description of beings that is not entitled.

A minute examination of character is as different from the common mode of reading history, as the powers of a mirror are from those of a microscope. Alexander, as transmitted down to us by the annals of tradition, has little more merit than Bucephalus; and Frederic, when engaged in the seven years' war, seems to have aimed at the blessing of a seven years' famine. It is not on the page of local history, it is not on the records of war, that any hero's private character

appears in a point of view that can enable us to judge what he was as a man: he must be followed into his retirements: he must lay aside his helmet and his breast-plate, before we can decide what share his head and heart have borne in the achievements of the day.

This necessary information, it must be acknowledged, diminishes in its minuteness, and perhaps in its authenticity, in proportion to the distance of time, which does not equally affect the bolder features of character. The consequence of this must sometimes be that injustice which results from ignorance. We read of battles and sieges, how they were conducted and how concluded; but the finer particles of the narrative have escaped, and hence all conquerors assume in our minds the same sanguinary complexion. On the contrary, in comparatively modern history, and more particularly in that of the present day, every species of
4 information

information is afforded us (and I believe I may venture to say often supplied from fancy) that can tend to settle our opinions, not only on actions, but their motives : a hero, therefore, has a better chance of being heard in his own defence.

Now from this disparity of minuteness between the ancient and modern biography, I am led to hope, that we are ignorant of many virtues possessed by the seeming scourges of the world. I do not mean to stand up the hypothetical eulogist of Nero or of Attila ; but where the actions of a man have really been those of a great man, I would give him some little credit for humanity. It is folly to expect the equity of Christianity from pagans, or the forbearance of civilization from barbarians : all we ask is, that as far as their morality taught them, they should be just, and that they should not degrade the intrepidity of a warrior into the ferocity of a savage.

There are, undoubtedly, in the conduct of Alexander, blemishes and reproaches no palliatives can soften : the only excuse to be offered is, that they uniformly occurred when his passions or excesses had hurried him out of his own character. I cannot believe he was naturally cruel, or that he any otherwise delighted in war, but as it was the only subject capable of filling his capacious mind, and of wholly employing his active spirit. From the consideration of his temper, the warmth of his attachments, the generosity he displayed on various occasions, I was always inclined to regard Alexander, notwithstanding all his faults, with affection. Compared with his contemporaries, he was certainly an accomplished prince ; and I very much question whether, by those who lived only two centuries after him, he was not thought of as we think of Henry the fourth of France, who, with all his courage, his philanthropy, his natural abilities, and his acquired know-

knowledge, was, in some points of his character, a very weak man; but his weaknesses were the effects of a warm heart; they were popular weaknesses, and therefore readily overlooked.

The more modern character of Frederic, which you have put under your *ban*, my dear Madam, with that of Alexander, is, to my comprehension, notwithstanding the multifold assistance of his own public writings, his private letters, his declared opinions, his private conversation, his manifest notions, and his developed motives, one of the most difficult to decide on that history presents to us. It is difficult so to connect the ideas of a liberal mind and an obstinate temper, as that they shall form either merit or consistency. It is hardly possible to believe any people could, by extent of dominion, or an elevation of rank, be repaid for the miseries inflicted on them by almost incessant war. What were the real views of a man who set his
own

own glory in the place of every law, it is difficult to define, in any way, that can link him to mankind as a social being; yet we have the best evidence that Frederic *thought* he had the good of his people at heart, and when he said that he never found pleasanter employment than in building a cottage for a poor man, he makes a claim on our feelings that we refuse to a mere politician. Yet against this evidence of his philanthropy it may be observed, that he who does not now and then, in the course of his life express, or indeed feel, some regard towards society, must be beyond all example of human ferocity—a *hero*.

There is a monarch, whose character we are all well acquainted with, and who in his day made pretensions to the distinction of Illustrious, but on whom I confess, as being anxious for his kingdom's welfare only, as far as it was connected with his own imaginary glory, I
hold

hold in contempt : this is Louis the fourteenth, who seems to me to have united in his composition all those qualities that render power formidable and hateful. No contrast between persons, at all within the parellel of comparifon, can be greater than that of this king and your admired Henry : could Henry have overcome his *internal enemies* as he did those of his state, he had been more than man : had Louis marshalled every virtue of his bosom, he never could have been as much as man. Instead of catching with avidity at the fragments and secret histories that elucidate his reign, I turn with disgust from the revelation of intrigue, and an exposure of mean artifice to circumvent all his neighbours.—Peace to his ashes !

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

THE most remarkable feature of the fourteenth letter of your first collection I am bound, by compact, my dear madam, to pass over, because I have promised not to rest my opinion of your glowing prophecies on events no one could foretel, though almost all now deplore. But without infringing my own law, I may wish your revolution-joy had not it cheated us of the sentiments your heart would otherwise have expressed, on visiting the cathedral at Rouen. The federation banner was very ill-placed if it could so obscure the church; and I think you have some reason to complain of its intrusion (could you quarrel with any thing, *à la nation*,) if it deprived you
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of that inexpressibly complacent sensation which accompanies us when we visit the pious edifices and sepulchres of our ancestors, a sensation powerful enough to seize minds the most callous, the least prone to contemplation—a sensation that could arrest the vagrant spirit even of so eccentric a genius as the late Paul Whitehead, who, speaking of the different sentiments excited by different modes of building, expressed himself in these words, rendered indeed more poignant by a few expletives I do not chuse to repeat, “ When I go into St. Paul’s, “ I look round and admire it as a magnificent building ; but when I go into “ Westminster-abbey, I will be hanged. “ if I am not all devotion.”

I lose sight of you, my dear madam, while you wander in the giddy mazes of joys, to which the present situation of affairs does not promise a very speedy resurrection, and find you again perfectly at home in your energetic and very judicious

dicious expressions of the emotion excited by the service of the Romish church. I willingly confess, that few of our sex who have felt its delusive power as forcibly as you do, have been as candid in the exercise of their reason: I should have regretted had the national church of your country lost you; but I could have apologised for your defection, by referring it to the texture of your heart.

The narrative you have given of the unexampled sufferings of Mons. du F— and his amiable wife, is sacred from all criticism, for it bears the evidence of truth, and there is not a sentiment of affection for the sufferers, or detestation of the monstrous iniquity that oppressed them, which my heart does not echo. Tyranny, such as that his father usurped, even if exercised but once in a century, calls for extirpation, and were the remedy effectual, I could forgive half the madness of our neighbours, if excited by their desire to prevent a repetition of it; but,

but, alas! they were a very small part of Monf. du F—'s sufferings that were connected with the *form* of government, the *abuse* was what punished him; and even all that part of his agonies must have been inferior to the keen wounds inflicted by the power that separated him from the object of his affection, a power which, under every mode of legislation, may be exercised, where a father can find resolution for the purpose, and is in a situation to say, "separate or starve!"

As I cannot pretend to that optical precision that is requisite for ascertaining the necessary effects of unexperienced causes, I will not deny, that it is probable all this power of restraining affections, and oppressing virtuous attachment, may be erased by the lately decreed revolution in the social relations of the French. Independent of all connection with your opinions, let me ask you, my dear madam, what you think of the late decrees against the perpetuity

tuity of the conjugal bond, and whether you still idolize, as infallible and impeccable, a legislation, which in an instant, and a sentence, dissolved the tenderest connections of life? What is now to become of the women of France? In what light will they be regarded that will not degrade them in the scale of creation? Where in that country shall faith, shall honor, shall love, the offspring of merit and sensibility, find even a protecting cottage? Will not parental affection take wing at the same time? To whom shall the child of capricious fathers and mothers resort for support, in its infancy and inexperience? Can the decrees of the National Convention change the nature of things? If they cannot, where are the interests of a family to be secured under a change of parents? 'Tis not establishing a free people, 'tis rearing a horde of Ishmaelites, thus to cut asunder what the internal

ternal sensations of the heart declare to be inseparable. I never possessed so much of the *amor patriæ*, as to determine I must have been wretched, had I not been born in England ; but in this one decree of the National Convention of France, I foresee what leads me to thank my destiny, I am not amenable to their unnatural jurisdiction.

But again, to return to your work.— In the twenty-third letter of your first volume, you candidly and amiably inform your readers who it is that you constitute your dictator on all questions of right or wrong, aristocracy or democracy. Your *heart*, you say, guides and enlightens you ; and you are convinced by its feeling, that that must be the best system of government by which those you love are made happy. I presume, that in this case, by *those you love*, we are to understand only your friends of the Du F— family ; for did you include

clude the whole circuit of your beloved connections, it might be difficult to hit on any system that would either make all happy, or not make some miserable. Now here, my dear Miss W. I, with all due respect, yield to you the palm of friendship and philanthropy, for I can never measure my opinion of fit or unfit with regard to a whole community, by fitness or unfitness, with regard to the wishes or the wants of any individual; and I think I may say, numberless cases and situations in friendship may occur, where the indulgence of so benevolent, yet so erroneous a disposition, would be far from promoting the interests of philanthropy. Suppose, for example, you had formed an early and a very close attachment with any one, not of your own religious opinions, or who, after your connexion was cemented, had quitted the profession of protestantism: suppose the schismatic to have the zeal of conviction

conviction in his or her temper, and consequently to be anxious for a general revolution in religious opinion, would you, because it would make a person *you love* happy, second, even by wish, the establishing such a form of government as would sanction and support the exchange?—It would, in my idea be just as prudent and as reasonable, and in effect as humane, to wish for incessant war, because one had a particular friend in Doctors' commons or Portsmouth dock-yard.

This is one of the passages in your work, that convinced me how little the heart is to be trusted as a monitor, where the interests of a people, or the guidance of their actions, are at all in question. Your politics, my dear Miss W. are what they ought to be, *fire-side politics*; but you are sadly misled as to the means by which *fire-side comfort* is to be obtained, if you think it can be extracted
from

from the schemes of the French revolutionists.

The integrity with which you write, convinces me that you do not perceive how much more gratitude you owe to the flint-hearted father of your friend, for dying, as you justly observe, so critically in the right place, than to all the exertions of the Anti-Bastilians and their followers. No revolution on the face of the globe could have restored peace to the wandering couple, had this Cyclops continued to exist: a son, such as you describe *Monf. du F——* could never have borne the idea of purchasing his own security by the ignominy of his father: therefore, had the government been ever so well disposed to do justice to the sufferer, and on the delinquent, he must have been still, though perhaps in safety and in affluence, wretched.—I believe I could find a power to which *Monf. du F——*'s present enjoyments
may

may much more correctly be attributed, and to which, I dare say, he has often referred in them,

“ Gold in the fire is tried, so righteous men

“ In the sharp furnace of adversity.”

L E T T E R VII.

YOU say, my dear madam, that you are persuaded the French, however democratical a people they may come out of Medea's cauldron, will still retain the pre-eminence over all other nations in politeness. I should have thought the other side of the argument the more tenable, as well as the more creditable to the principles of your favorite people. A desire to please, implies something like a confession of superiority. Blunt sincerity is better adapted to the equalization of a democracy and the maintenance of those rights so warmly stickled for without being ascertained or defined to this hour. If our Gallic neighbours retain their national characteristic of politeness

liteness (which, pray Heaven, they may, lest it should wander across the Channel) it will, I think, have lost all pretensions to that supposed, but perfectly useless virtue, *sincerity*. It may pass even in its new-modelled state with their Assignats; but it will never have the *eloquent persuasion* of a *Louis d'or*.

I am not much given to take up with ready-made opinions, nor can I render my own so flexible as always to be the same with that of the last speaker. I was not educated in the trite path of female accomplishments, therefore, I am a little singular. While I submitted to parental guidance, I was convinced I should be rendered, by deviation from the common mode, unacceptable to the world. I have been taught the error of my fears, and I confess it with the utmost gratitude; but this apology I am forced to bring forward as a defence against those who think no ignorance so profound, as that

which starts opinions *bors de la mode*. It is to this singularity of education I attribute a variety of sceptical notions I entertain with respect to the *petite morale* of life: it is this that makes me develop motives, before I commend or blame actions: it is this that makes me doubt whether we are at all correct in our definition or estimation of the minor virtue, which we name politeness.

I have heard politeness called an abridgement of, and a substitute for, every good quality; if so, it is, as far as I can judge, hypocrisy; nor is it much improved, when demonstrated *artificial benevolence*: we had better possess the reality. It has been styled an uniform attention to others; it is then real benevolence; and as such, under whatever name it appears, let us cherish it. Admitting either of these terms to explain it, we annihilate it as a distinct species of virtue: it is hypocrisy, or it is benevolence;

lence ; it is contemptible, or it is amiable.

I fear the *study* of politeness has done much to degrade it, and to confine it to the less satisfactory subdivision of it. We confound it with good breeding, and yet would retain it as morality. We often deny the praise of it to those who fulfil all its intentions, and ascribe it to those who have none of the requisites for it, but the narrowest selfishness.

I am an advocate for leaving this fascinating quality to speak for itself, by its derivation ; but then I would have it pass in the world only for its own currency. Considering it as expressing only smoothness, I should always reckon well-bred ease of manners politeness ; but I should never allow it the smallest affinity with the temper. I should never extol any person for their good nature, because I saw them do the honors of their house with attention and propriety. I look on them as

having a temporary character to support, and as being either excited by a desire of commendation, or awed by the fear of reproach. I would grant that, *as* the duchess is polite in her manners, she *may* be of a benevolent temper; but I could not infer, that *because* she was polite, she *must* be benevolent.

Good temper and good breeding are as little allied as good temper and good sense: they may meet, they often do meet; but they oftener exist separately. Many an ingenuous mind has been irreparably deceived by mistaking politeness for affectation; many a man has wedded an irreclaimable shrew, by fancying that great talents included great virtues.

I believe we may, without danger of injustice, venture so far as to believe a non-attention to the semblance of social affections an unfavorable indication, where it is found in a mind not previously occupied with higher considerations. Those who are above the world

in their sentiments or pursuits, should not hazard the consequences of a conflict with it: those who do not disdain its occupations and its pleasures, must conform to its rules, or an obstinacy is evinced not at all calculated to promote even their own ease.

It has been my good fortune, and I am happy here to mention it, to meet with several characters amongst my intimate acquaintance, who have possessed that genuine politeness which no art can teach, no accident can disturb. If we contemplate the politeness which is acquired, we shall see that the moment the passions are touched upon, it vanishes; but that which is interwoven with the heart, the politeness of humanity and good sense, is subject to no change.

What an amiable picture of inbred politeness is exhibited in the uniform, unconstrained, unprompted benevolence of a venerable character, known to

almost all the great and idle of our metropolis, who seek the early blossoms of the spring, or the autumnal tribute of the vine and the fig-tree. I dare not name thee, my friend, lest I pain thy humility, lest I dye thy furrowed cheek, as my acknowledgments often have, with the blush of lowliness; but I will in shadow admire thee, and devoutly wish, that when thy firm old age at last gives way under the scythe of time, thou couldest bequeathe me all of thy possessions I covet, thy gentle temper. And when my heart heaves a sigh to thy remembrance, and my repelled steps turn from thy forsaken mansion, I will console myself with reflecting I knew thy modest worth, and I will boast with greater pride than the associates of kings, that thy unlettered conversation has instructed me.

Nor when I contemplate those sterling virtues, of which acquired politeness is but the counterfeit, can I pass thee

thee by, my inseparable friend, to whose partial eye these pages will be first offered; thou, who through all accidents and discouragements, hast incessantly watched the rise of every wish of my heart, or anticipated it; whose friendship nothing can repay, but the conscious reward of virtuous deeds; who in circumstances eminently unfavorable to the cultivation of the finer affections, hast preserved the purest morality, and a spirit endowed with all that can cheer or conciliate; who hast borne with tenderness all the fluctuations of temper incident to my uncertain health, and hast, without the prospect even of the honest reward of praise, sought my happiness with the assiduity of a fond parent. May my heart profit by thy example, as my understanding has by thy ingenious liberality!—I dare not disobey thee by offering a tribute of thanks. Let me then adopt the words of an amiable French writer, M. de Florian, and with

him say, " Il faut bien estimer quel-
 " qu'un pour consentir à lui devoir
 " tout."

Before I quit the subject of habitual politeness, as opposed to that resulting from the junction of discernment and benevolence, permit me to remark, in the words of the author I have just cited, on the effect produced by studying and adopting character, rather than forming it on our own qualities and perceptions. He says, " Le grand precepte *Il faut être*
 " *comme les autres* qui fait la base de nos
 " éducations, met une assez grande confor-
 " mité dans les mœurs, dans les actions,
 " dans le langage de ceux qui composent
 " la société. Chaque âge, chaque état a ses
 " idées, son ton, ses manières convenues ;
 " on les prend sans en appercevoir, et les
 " formules, les devoirs d'usage, l'obliga-
 " tion de parler lorsque l'on ne voudroit
 " rien dire, l'habitude de traiter comme
 " des amis ceux dont on ne s'occupe guère ;
 " enfin, la monotonie de la politesse, si
 " l'on

“ l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi, éteignent le
“ naturel et font disparoitre les nuances des
“ caractères. Tout n'en est peut-être que
“ mieux, et il faut bien que cela soit, puis-
“ que l'on est si heureux dans le monde.
“ Je ne pretends point ici m'eriger en
“ censeur, je veux dire seulement que j'ai
“ trouvé un peu de ressemblance entre ce
“ qu'on appelle le monde et le bal de
“ l'opera. C'est assurément un lieu en-
“ chanteur, on y fait infiniment d'esprit,
“ on y voit de très jolis masques, mais un
“ peintre seroit peut-être embarrassé d'y
“ trouver une physionomie.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

THE conclusion of one of your letters, my dear madam, shall furnish a commencement to one of mine; for though I cannot pay any very great deference to those of your *opinions* that you confess to be founded on the *sentiment* of the moment, I can enter most cordially into the spirit that animates your feelings, and I can love you for what I reject as a counsellor, the glowing warmth of your social affections—You wept at the supper of Mon. du F's *fête*—you wept when you meant to be exceedingly merry—my heart accords with your's, when you say they were tears of luxury!—I am sure they were; but let me intreat you, my dear Miss W. let me conjure you by
those

those emotions which bespeak the glorious possession of a soul, do not risque the blunting those sensations which form the charm of life, and which can receive no second edge by a rude conflict with robust opinion, or in the friction of political argument. Let not your democratic zeal contaminate with passion a mind, tuned only to the harmony of society, or give it even to casual observers the hue of anger: Let not susceptible Helen, who in scenes of joy weeps tears of luxury, be ranked with the viragos of party.

We love whatever we excel in. You are jealous, I perceive, by a passage in the twenty-fifth letter of your first volume, for the maintenance of literature in France.—I, with much humbler pretensions, feel equally interested in its preservation; and as I would fly from savages, should shun a country where it had no admission; but I am afraid that the member of the National

onal Assembly who opposed the institution of rewards for literary merit, on the plea that the state needed husbandmen not poets, had truth and experience on his side. Lord Bacon says, that in the infancy of a state *arms* flourish, in its maturity *letters*, and in its decline *arts*. As France must now be considered an *infant* state, I apprehend the attempt to teach her thus early to read and write, would only accelerate the autumn of her existence.

Dec. 1792.

After a long cessation of almost all intellectual exertion, an interval filled with one of those beneficial, yet painful occurrences of life, which teach us to see and to judge correctly ; after being reduced to a state of health, that in my idea rendered this world a place in which I had
no

no farther interest, I wake to observation of the events passing in it; and almost sorry am I, that I have waked to such a purpose. Instead of the grateful expansion of heart I am accustomed to feel, on contemplating my own privileged situation, which has uniformly afforded me protection and moderate enjoyment, I am oppressed by terrors of what the succeeding hours may produce; every comfort I possess is mournfully endeared to me, by the reflection that the most alarming licentiousness has rendered the possession of it more precarious than ever. Nor is this privation the greatest cause I feel for fear. The social ties are the only comforts of life, I could not with fortitude renounce, and what security have we at this moment, that rapine and violence may not shortly exile and separate the nearest friends? O Miss Williams, I would not for the possession of all your powers, or all their possible advantages, take

take on myself the load of error you so joyfully bear. I cannot suppose you so indifferent to the success of your exertions, as not to have cared whether your democratic effusions were read with conviction, or contempt. As I respect your talents, I must believe you to have effected the purpose you designed, that of exciting republican opinions. In a government settled as a monarchy, was this fair? Is it humanity, is it philanthropy, to strive to render a people discontented? Is it consistent with the obedience our Saviour by his example taught, to rouse a spirit of rebellion and sedition in a whole kingdom? And, for Heaven's sake, where is the equivalent cause for it? I will tell you the cause that really urges the insane of the present day.—We are bursting with a plethora of happiness—we know not what we would have: we spurn Heaven's best blessings; we misuse them; and calamities, such as now await us, are the only

only medicines that can bring us to our senses.—You will then say you are at least a salutary physician.—Yes ; as much so, in my opinion, as the executioner is to that of a condemned criminal.

Yet, angry as I am, and as all who love peace, are with you, and those who have kindled the present flame, you share my sincerest pity.—Perhaps you foresaw not the extremities to which public affairs have proceeded : you then, I am sure, lament that you ever, by one incendiary sentiment, nourished the embers.—If your mind was strong enough to prophesy their direful probabilities, and yet could proceed in its hostile operations, conviction has not yet reached you. I will not prognosticate unpleasant situations of mind to you ; but should a time come, when you can look only to the consolation of a religion that breathes a spirit of peace, you may regret, that in the rage for reformation,
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even the profession of that religion is abolished.

Were the subtraction of all luxury, or were even the reduction of affluence to competency, what is aimed at by mob-rulers, I should little pity the sufferers under their tyranny; nor should I claim much right to complain in my own person, if my superfluities were applied to the relief of those for whose distresses my heart has often ached: but we must remove ourselves to the primæval ages of ignorance, we must shut our eyes and ears against the conviction of all experience, if we believe faction ever yet acted on the steady principles of disinterestedness. I grant, that in order to form a plausible cause, and sometimes, I hope, impelled by the virtuous sensation of the moment, a deluded party has professed principles the most honourable; but how soon have these given way to the most clamorous suggestions of

of greediness or want ! In the riots of 1780, it is a known fact that the public-spirited incendiaries, in the first days of their fury, threw a large quantity of guineas into a fire they had made of the furniture of a house. It is nearly as notorious, that they soon laid aside this generosity. So has it been in Paris ; and such will be, without doubt, very speedily the necessities, and the conduct of the august National Convention, who are now living, as it is termed, *on the quick*, and must, whatever may be their revolutions, unless their own annihilation be one of them, resort to that species of accumulation, which, however sanctioned or disguised, is robbery and plunder.

The spirit of sedition, amongst us, has ripened astonishingly within a very short space of time. 'Tis easy to account for this forced maturity. The French anarchy is to be held up to us for a model ; and

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we must hasten to copy it ; for its most strenuous partisans must know it cannot, of itself, subsist long : it must be supported, if it stands at all, by the ruin of every state around it.

It is impossible, my dear madam, that you, a woman of education, information, and reflection, can be gulled with the *Poissardes*, and the *Sans Culottes*. You must be acquainted with history ; you must have considered the characters of Sejanus and Catiline ; you must be convinced, that, whatever their pretences, their own necessities were the stimulus to, their aggrandisement was the end of, all their plots. Does not that letter of Manilius, which Sallust has recorded, breathe exactly the spirit of our present reformers ? Does not he call gods and men to witness, that liberty was all his party fought, at the same time that the whole tenor of the letter proves envy and want to be the motives of their actions ?

tions? To advert only to our own history, are we not sufficiently taught by the conduct of former republicans to distrust them? Who is there now, that does not fully penetrate the artful character of Cromwell? Who will now so far prostitute eulogy, as to say, he was an honest man; or not as much a tyrant in his heart and government, as the Stuarts he opposed.

It is one unalienable privilege of false argument, that it is never confuted. What has been urged, denied, and proved to be false ten thousand times, the maintainers of sophistical hypotheses are not ashamed to assert as roundly as if the world had always admitted it. Hence arises that persevering spirit which preaches universal equality, in spite of conviction; that universal equality is as impossible an accident of existence, as universal health. Equality, in point of riches, may be established; but
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it can be only for an instant. Give every member of a community five pounds, with a licence, which every man will take, whether granted or not, to make the most of it: can you, or any person in their senses, believe, that at the expiration of a year, there would remain any trace of the former equality. Would not each man's gains be as various as his talents, or his industry? What then? Must there be a new partition? Must industry have been exerted only to be robbed of its fruits? Is not this tyranny? Or is there a manly spirit in the world, that would submit to it? Equality in rank, is a sound vastly bewitching to the ears of the vulgar, and no wonder. It is often much easier to debase others, than to raise ourselves. It is more congenial to a bad mind to take away the cause of envy, than to cease to be envious. Democracy, therefore, is a term expressive of the felicity
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of the golden age. It is hope that must recommend it: I am sure neither reason nor experience can say a word for it. Let any man try a democracy in his own family, for one week; and, unless he is furrounded by angels instead of relatives and domestics, I may venture to predict he will be weary of it. It is the democratic spirit that has hurried many a parent to an untimely grave; and many a child to infamy and ruin.

LETTER

L E T T E R IX.

THE acute sensation of impending misery, which I perceive is as much dreaded by the poor it seems calculated to relieve, as the rich it is avowedly designed to demolish, has led me from the more immediate examination of your pages, my dear madam, to reflect on their tendency and connected consequences. You will forgive the digression, if you allow others the liberty you claim on behalf of your own feelings.

On your arrival in London, you were shocked by the false representation you met with of the French affairs. Your statement of these falsities (such has been the revolution of a revolution) reads
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now like a fulfilled prophecy, and I hope, for the sake of your consistency, your opinions have undergone some change. I hope and trust, whatever may be her enthusiasm in the sacred cause of liberty, and her abhorrence of that curse of mankind, despotism, that the tender-hearted Helen Williams would not, even by a look, sanction cruelty. I hope no Englishwoman will ever be heard to utter the detestable sentiment of a *ci-devant* countess, that the 10th of August, 1792, was a glorious day for France—a sentiment fit only for the mouth of a Despot; a sentiment that will for ever make me condemn the lady, and suspect her boasted morality.

You ask very shrewdly, my dear madam, why the French should not be permitted to make an experiment in politics?—I know no reason against making any experiment, if you set aside considerations of prudence. But who, in his wits, ever made an experiment

on what he could not subsist without, that did not admit of his restoring what he made it on to its former state? The naturalist experimentises dogs and cats in an air-pump; they die in the process: he has gained knowledge, and they are not missed; but would he do the same with his wife, his children, or himself? No, surely; because he knows his comfort or his life must be at stake. ‘’Tis too serious to be trifled with,’ is a sentiment in the mouth of every thinking being: pray, is the mode in which millions shall be governed and protected, a trifle that every quack may try his wits on?

Every thing I have urged in contradiction to you, has been founded on the supposition that the French government wanted reformation; and where is the government, even of a private family, that does not?—But all the world, if they dared speak their sentiments, and had virtue enough to discard

discard their own interests, must see and confess that the work of reformation, however well intended and planned, has been taken out of the hands of the first projectors, by a set of men, who having nothing to lose, and nothing to fear, have every thing to gain and hope ; but I am persuaded that there is, *in our country*, a spirit that will resent their open attempts, and a penetration that will render abortive all their insidious schemes to involve us in their ruin. A few months, nay, perhaps a few weeks, it is thought, will bring about another revolution in France ; and, perhaps, cool the heads of those amongst us who are really deluded. It is not in the nature of things that any constitution, established in open defiance of religion, as that of France is, can stand. I have neither bigotry nor superstition about me ; but I am confident that where the bond of religion is broken, there can be no public faith,—and that,

where there is no faith, there cannot long be any concord.

You conclude your first volume, with a conjectural comparison of the French revolution, to the improvements of modern times in ship-building. The thought is pretty, and you have expressed it in language the happiest and most elegant possible. Had Dr. Blair been now employed in the composition of his lectures on the Belles-Lettres, he certainly would have quoted the passage as an instance of the force and harmony of language. What he would have thought of the comparison itself, I cannot so favorably prophesy. It appears to me, that the simile would have been more exact, had you resembled the National Assembly to a set of artificers, who should destroy a whole navy in order to construct a flying frigate; for as easy will they find it to sail through the atmosphere, as to form a solid basis for their hypothetical

tical government ; and should it be adduced against me, that America is their archetype, I shall no otherwise confute the assertion, than by denying it. There, and in every country under the canopy of Heaven, there is, there must be, and may there ever be!—subordination.

L E T T E R X.

PERMIT me, my dear madam, on opening your second volume, which I shall very cursorily review, to ask you this simple question once more, Is misery of any kind less grievous when borne by an advocate for monarchy, than by the enthusiast for democracy? If not, why is your pity so limited as that you feel it only for the revolutionists, and treat the contrary party with asperity? Is there no merit in a man's adhering to principles once assumed, even if they are not quite correct, when that tenacity is the consequence of honest opinion? Are all the friends of a king the enemies of the
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the people? Is fidelity no virtue? Is loyalty become a crime?

Little as you have said respecting the unfortunate Louis, it is easy to perceive that *the nation* is your idol, and that you entertain a due and fashionable contempt for the regal authority. I believe it is not a bad king that you particularly abhor; it is the kingly character that you reject from your favor. I should like, on these principles, to know, what is your opinion of the subordination of matrimony? You and I think and feel very differently, if your heart does not tell you, without the assistance of your reason, that there is infinite pleasure in obeying those we love; and you are far more enlightened than one of the most eminent divines of our own church, if you deny, that it is easier as well as safer to be governed than to govern.

Living in France at the time of writing your second volume of letters, or rather your gleanings, you compare to

living in the regions of romance. At the present moment I could find, in some of Milton's descriptions, as apt a comparison, but this would be an unfair anticipation. You are now, I understand, in this charming region of romance. I wish its accompaniments may have proved "euphrasy and rue" to your visual organs.

Homer is much obliged to you for your vindication of him, by relating the unison exclamation at the taking the Bastille; but give me leave to tell you, you state a fact impossible to be ascertained. The loudest voice will seem, in a multitude, the voice of all—the sentence is too long to have been unanimous—the sentiment might be the same. I do not doubt that the truth of this anecdote was vouched to you. All exaggeration is of use in such a cause.

When you carry your passion for liberty into the territories of the Muses,
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it is in its right place. I have always observed that poets have been violent advocates for what they indefinitely term liberty, and have always ranked their political opinions with the apparent belief of romance-writers in supernatural agency; but against the glowing picture of happiness which you have dressed up for your corresponding friend, I beg leave to oppose this brief advice, "Have patience, and see the event."

How Henry the fourth obtained the good fortune of your favor, is not easy to discover; nor is it in my power to determine, what has of late years rendered him so fashionable. Certainly his being a king, stood much in his way to public love; but, notwithstanding this impediment, as a *man*, he was, till lately, popular. I love his character for every virtue it was adorned with; but I cannot but think it, in the indiscriminating judgment of the world, invidiously ex-

toll'd, for the purpose of decrying the less brilliant qualities of others. Henry the fourth of France was one of the greatest men the world has produced; he was great in his virtues and his vices; and he was fortunate in having a minister, whose temper and abilities exactly fitted his own deficiencies; but Henry the fourth is not to be extoll'd as a god: he was brave, he was polite, he was humane; he was a miracle of perseverance under all the oppressions of adversity; but his failings amounted almost to ferocious qualities: his passion for play was a weakness nothing could cure, nothing can excuse; and he had other propensities, which made his existence a curse to many individuals.

While we admire such a mixed character, we ought in justice to reflect, that to want its great qualities, is safer than to possess it with their contrasts. An
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even tenor of virtue may have little to strike our imaginations, but we declare ourselves virtue's enemies, if our reason at least does not confess she is most charming in simplicity and integrity.

The French are an amiable accommodating people, you tell us, after you have depicted the uproar of the *place du Martroy* at Orleans, and, to heighten this character of them, you compare the toleration of pamphlet-shops in the passages to the hall, occupied by the National Assembly, with the more strict discipline of our senate. The sneer is petulant enough, and there is little weight in the remark. The conviction it brings to my mind, which, I confess, is a mind untaught by fashion, and uncontrolled by any tyranny, even that of republicanism, is, that Miss Helen Williams, in her great partiality for the French, restrains her power of observa-

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tion to those points and circumstances which she believes friendly to them. She sees only as much, and she penetrates only as deeply as her idols wish, else she would have gone so far as to have noticed the *good policy* of the democrats, who permitted the sale of *brochures* in the avenues. Every one knows the power of the press; every one knows it is the tool as well, and more efficaciously, of faction as of government. A much more discerning traveller in France, than Miss W.'s sex would allow her to be, has spoken largely on this subject; and, in justice to the party that had an equal right with the mob to be heard, has lamented that a torpor seemed to have seized their pens and their faculties.

“ The French revolution is not only
“ sublime in a general view, but is
“ often beautiful when considered in
“ detail.” On this passage all comment would be unfair, because my
2 ideas

ideas are tinctured with the transactions of this autumn. I will only add to it, this extract *memoriter*, from a Trip just published, "I might have been shocked
" had I seen but one dead body, but seeing
" such heaps, I did not feel concerned."

LETTER

L E T T E R XI.

THE remarks you offer, on the unwillingness of some of the French *noblesse* to part with the empty distinction of title, are certainly, my dear madam, as far as they go, just. But as there are two angles under which all objects are viewed, allow me to ask you, whether the question, respecting the renunciation of nobility, is quite as decided as it appears?—Unless we reject with our honors our belief in holy writ, we ought to pay some respect to what is called *birth-right*; for if Esau was alienated from the divine favor by his little regard for it, it surely can be no faint-like virtue to imitate him in his contempt.

I despise,

I despise, as heartily as you can, all that mock pageantry of title and heraldry, which gives ignorance and insolence the privilege of lording it over lowly virtue. The bar of illegitimacy, is a far less foul blot in the armorial ensigns, than the unmerited coronet in the personal character ; and could it be stripped only from those who misuse it, could none claim it but such as made it a blessing to their dependants, I should most gladly see a reformation in nobility : but whatever we may *fancy*, the nature of things is immutable. There must be evil in the world, or where should we look for virtue ? and those who are advocates for the maintenance of the order of nobility, may, with very good pretensions ask, whether a man is not guilty of a cowardly action, who yields up, without resistance or remonstrance, those honors which an ancestor perhaps has died in obtaining, and which have been
trans-

transmitted fairly to him through many generations?

On turning to the fifth letter of your second volume, which begins with your visit to the Sugar-house, I could not but stop three times short of the conclusion of the paragraph, to ask myself, how you could be induced to visit a place, where, I believe, Chambers's dictionary would have informed you you must be shocked and disgusted; but I was presently convinced that your visit was not without its use.—Sugar, Africans, Slavery, Tyranny, Cruelty, was a climax of recollection that instantly reached and wounded your feelings.—I will not enter into argument here, lest I repeat what I have said before. I will only submit to your consideration, for the benefit of your nerves, these truths. There are very few people in this country, or in France, competent to ascertain the real state of those condemned to slavery; but
all

all can judge of its commercial advantages ; and of those few, whose intellectual endowments enable them to develop the important truth, many are voluntarily blind. The affectation of humanity in some, and the encouragement of weak sensibility in others, have dressed up a monstrous idea of West-Indian barbarity. Like all monstrous ideas, this may have originated from a particle of truth, which is now overwhelmed in the exaggeration. Believe, therefore, my dear Miss W. very cautiously on this point so incredibly degrading to human nature. Listen to the barbarity-mongers with that allowance you give to the marvellous, and if you would be at peace, be convinced that we are safer in our endeavors to discharge our private duties, than, knight-errant-like, in undertaking to rectify abuses we cannot judge of.

Almost every page of your letters offers a subject of comment ; but I pass
over

over much, because I abhor hypercriticism, and because my only view in putting together these desultory remarks, is, I will candidly confess, to prevent, as far as I am able, your doing mischief; by inflaming the minds of my countrywomen with notions they had better be without. Society has already suffered abundantly by the ill-applied labors of republicans; and as women are most eager to see what women can effect, female republicans have had it very much in their power to disturb domestic peace, by contending charitably, as we must believe, for those extensions of prerogative to wives and daughters, which no wife or daughter has a claim to, or ought to be trusted with. Women are said to be naturally contentious for power:—it is idle to contend for what they already possess, if they did but know the blessing when they enjoyed it.

O for-

O fortunatas nimium sua si bona nôrint !

Every woman, connected by any tie of relation or affection with the other sex, has power more than she ought to exert to the utmost. If she is really amiable, and if she possesses a moderate share of good sense, she has power that contributes largely to the happiness of both parties. If she is one of those beings that all dread and none love, let her console herself for the ten thousand mortifications she will meet with, by this reflection, that the spirit of a man may resist every untoward accident, nay, every misery of life, and yet bow under the tyranny of a female *democrate*. The influence of such an one is unbounded : by asserting her own rights, she may not only empty his purse, and teach his children and servants to resist his authority ; but she has him more immediately at mercy, she may deprive him

him

him of all rest; she may starve him into terms; she may make his house untenable—and then some one, perhaps, her inferior in all Nature's gifts but in common sense, may, by the bare influence of words, expressing commiseration, or looks that say "I pity you," obtain that situation of confidence and esteem, want of judgment and temper forfeited. A contingency that ought to make many among us weary; for it requires no great depth of astrology to foresee, that if the subversion of our government does not *abrogate* marriage, the invidious arts, now in practice, will lead many a man to suppose himself justified, by excessive provocation, in seeking peace wherever he can find it.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

THE respect I entertain for your talents, my dear madam, does not prevent my smiling at your amiable simplicity, when you talk of an old woman reading the news-paper to a circle of rustics, who retired from the edifying lecture to discuss the conduct of their legislators, and arrange the fabric of their new government *with a noble freedom of debate.*

It seems a point decidedly agreed on by a certain class of people, that where interest or ambition are concerned, the defects of ignorance are supplied by intuitive knowledge; and that a sort of illumination accompanies a disposition to resist, which places the vulgarest mind
on

on a level with the best informed. Nothing but the assumption of this hypothesis can account for the confidence with which persons, not in the smallest degree acquainted with the subject of politics, deliver their own crude opinions, respecting the complex interests of kingdoms and states.

It is not, perhaps, wonderful, that the untaught should be ignorant of their own ignorance, and therefore impudent in their folly; but, that those who have explored the paths to knowledge, who are aware of their difficulties, and who have learnt enough to be diffident, should abet the temerarious clamor, and approve in the momentous decision of public concerns, that licence which they would check on every other subject, is to me astonishing.

Were an artist to exhibit a picture or a statue for the opinion of connoisseurs, he would listen candidly to their censures; but were a man, who knows
nothing

nothing of his art, to interpose his capricious criticisms, he would be despised, as obtruding his judgment where he had no justification. Were a carpenter to tell a shoe-maker he knew nothing of his business, because he did not put the parts of a shoe together as he joined those of a box, the shortest answer to him would be, "You know nothing of the matter." Were a child to interrupt a harpsichord player, when his reputation depended on his performance, by insisting on it that the keys had all equal rights, and therefore that he should proceed in regular gradation through the octaves, we might laugh at the pert folly, but the performer would scarcely join us.

What is it, then that enables all people, those with intellect and those without, those who know their own language when they see it on paper, and those who do not, to judge without previous instruction, the important rights of the

the governors and the governed.—A previous question presents itself, have they this ability? Deciding only by the rules of common sense and experience, I do not hesitate to say, that presumption is no substitute for knowledge, and that the commonalty of every country are as ill-qualified to judge the conduct of their superiors, as I am to direct the steerage of a man of war.

In every other case it would be allowed dangerous to listen to ignorant advisers. A painter who should be guided by his colourman, an architect who consulted his laborer, an author who made the compositor his judge, would stand little chance for success with a superior class; but the loss to the world would be inconsiderable, compared with the mischief we may expect, if the audience of a lecturing gossip are to be our legislators.

There is a point in public affairs, on which I grant the voices of the commonalty,

monalty, nay, of the very lowest of the low orders ought to have influence. Oppression increases as it gravitates: extortion and scarcity can be fitly judged of only by the poor; because, by the poor only are they felt in their full force. When, therefore, the Parisians clamoured for bread, I sincerely pitied them: if they could not beg redress, they had an undoubted right to enforce it; but was the option monarchy or a loaf?—No, they first decided on their own wants, which they could judge of: they then proceeded to decide on questions they could not judge of. What must be the infatuation of those who do not see that these poor people, crying for bread, were in all their distresses made the tools of a set of men equally ambitious with the most despotic tyrant? Those who first embarked in the great undertaking, were in general respectable and moderate; but these

were soon expelled, and their successors were a few months ago driven out in like manner, and so will the present reigning power shortly be, by some new empirics.

The noble freedom of debate you so admire, would indeed be noble, were it exercised as a means of discovering our duty; but I fear few commence politicians with a view to learn how to *obey*. However specious and public-spirited such disputants may appear, “by their fruits shall ye know them.” Moderation ever marks the conduct of those who have nothing but justice in view: there is a generosity in true patriotism that disdains to make the most even of an advantage. An English highwayman, impelled by the wants of those dearest to him to plunder, will often refuse a superfluity; but the polite French, first clamoring for bread, proceed to the demolition of that which no arguments
can

can prove to have been connected with their distress; and as soon as their hunger was appeased, contrive the ruin of him whose heart had often bled for their distresses. This I assert on the authority of general concurrence; for it will, in after ages, be as difficult to prove Louis the sixteenth a tyrant, as to persuade posterity, that in the eighteenth century the French were not a barbarous people.

I have granted, and all the world must grant, that in Paris, and in every part of the French dominions, there were abuses and enormities that required speedy correction. Whatever can put a stop to cruelty, or even to insolence, I should rejoice to see practised, if a virtuous motive dictated the reformation. May the French never know the want of bread! may they never again be subject to that tyranny, which drives with impunity over the body or limbs of a fellow-creature! But is there no medium between

being injured and injuring? Must a man, because the law protects him, set up for the equal of him, against the excess of whose power it shields him, in spite of all the distinction Nature has made? If so, do let us, my dear Miss W. go one step farther: let us declare ourselves equals, not only in rank, but in every endowment. We shall then be all equal in beauty, in height, and strength. Equally wise we already are; and equally rich we are to be, if the machinations of our good friends succeed.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIII.

HAD I been of your party, my dear madam, when your compassion was moved by seeing the family who were employed in dragging a little cart for their subsistence, I should have added my sympathy to your's ; for, in my opinion, it was a sight humanity could not have looked on with steadiness. I should have thought it a-kin to slavery, notwithstanding it was posterior to the French revolution ; but, from the hilarity of the laborers, I should have learnt how ill qualified I am to judge " what is good or evil for man in this life," and I should for ever have been deterred from interfering to redress grievances I could not understand, and to promote

happiness I might annihilate in the amendment; and most devoutly do I wish that this caution operated, as it ought, on all public and private reformers: we should then be secure of one privilege the sticklers for ideal liberty would deprive us of, the inestimable privilege of being at peace.

I have always deducted much from the truth of the accounts we receive from France, stating the whole country to be one scene of misery and confusion; because I doubt not that these circumstances are purposely exaggerated. For a very different reason I am forced to do the same by your narratives, my dear madam. By a new mode of perspective, you bring the distance of all your pictures into the fore-ground. What you wish, you hope; what you hope, you foresee; and what you foresee, you consider as present. No one who reads your letters, could easily

easily persuade himself to believe, the disgraceful details of August and September were at all dependant on the events you have recorded. No one could look for a set of assassins and butchers amongst your singing and dancing Parisians. Are the tenth of August and the third of September to be reckoned amongst the halcyon days you prophesied?

Turning to the eleventh letter of your second collection, I am really almost tempted to lay down my pen, and destroy every line of these remarks.—I have hitherto, I hope, written temperately.—I have avoided whatever I thought even *uncivil*; but here, I protest, it is difficult for any body who does not kick at all subordination of decency, and I may say religion, to be patient.—In the name of common sense, Miss W. how can you object it as a crime to Philippe le Bel, that he first

made offences against the king high-treason? In the whole progress of government it is observable, that punishments in time lose their efficacy; lenient measures can be efficient only in ages of simplicity. Will the punishments of a child restrain a man? Is vice now awed by what formerly could controul it? Is not every thing, when grown familiar, despised? Why then may not Philippe le Bel, in that instance, rather be called a reformer than a tyrant? You will answer, because as kings are odious, the means to preserve them are iniquitous. May you, my dear madam, never feel the want of a protector!—but should a time come, when either your person or your property is in danger from the relaxation of authority, you will then feel that a helpless woman is a miserable politician, if she has helped to overturn a throne.

I could,

I could, perhaps, forgive your censure of the French *tyrant*, on the supposition that you knew not the circumstances of his time; but your encomium on your dear revolution, your tracing it from literature, philosophy, reason, &c. &c.;—your comparison of liberty to light, when the French rage for liberty might be so much more fitly compared to a conflagration; your quotation from scripture, to support doctrines that war against Heaven, are all in my idea inexcusable. There is but one condition on which you can regain your situation, in the esteem of the *reasonable* part of the world, and to be consistent you must, and I flatter myself you will, comply with it.—You have now seen a part of the consequences of this revolution; that part has utterly contradicted your predictions: the French have now shewn themselves to be a people very undeserving your praises:—give

up therefore the cause,—confess that the present power has far outgone your wishes; and do, by a subsequent publication, convince the world that you are not, what I have heard you in some circles termed, a *poissarde* and a fire-brand.

I am so tired of the labor of criticism,—and so hurt at the unfeminine tendency of your last volume, that I turn over the pages, hoping I shall see no marks of my pencil; but the name of Madame de Sillery stops me, and when I read your expressions of deference for her, I have little hope that you will return to the calm character of an Englishwoman. I should be sorry, however, to hear, that your notions of liberty exactly coincided with her's, since, if I am not misinformed, she has published more than one *living creed*, and enjoys a rank in the literary world, of her pretensions to which M. de la Harpe's

Harpe's testimonies are stronger than her own.—‘*Bear and forbear,*’ is a maxim that would make a good motto for her medallion.

‘What are the misfortunes of Louis ‘the sixteenth?’ is a question you put to your correspondent.—I will not criminate your judgment by adducing posterior facts.—I will only say, I write this on the 19th of December 1792, and that I with no uncommon powers of foresight, and reasoning only from similar cases, could have told you long before you wrote that question, what is now the answer to it.—Heu pietas! Heu prisca fides!

I like wonderfully, and it almost diverts my ill temper at this moment, to see you stroking the English lion, after you have set the less noble French emblem to peck at him. But the generous beast disdains equally your attacks and your caresses; and, as a friend, I warn you to beware of his gripe.

The freedom of the press has been grossly abused—sedition will not meet with the encouragement it has boasted of. Some people laugh at you and your reasonings about Magna Charta; but, there are others not quite so merrily disposed, and who sincerely wish, for your own sake, that if you cannot be a quiet subject of a well-regulated monarchy, you would please to remain where your republicanism may prove only one coal in a flaming furnace.

I am so thoroughly wearied of my undertaking, and really so irritated by observing the effects produced by the dissemination of such vague principles of liberty as the press every day sends forth, that I will remark on no more of your reiterated sentiments, my dear madam, now that I have stumbled on that which converts an army into a jury, and teaches them to dispute before they obey.—Do, in pity to the poor wretches
you

you are teaching the art of rebellion, either give them that portion of reason which is necessary to their arduous decisions, or find a way to indemnify them against the mischiefs that you subject them to. O glorious days of liberty and republicanism, when ignorance is power, subversion produces happiness, and peace alone is a crime! Ovid was a booby when he wrote

“*Pax juvat, et media pace repertus amor.*”

Let us rather call on the furies to come and aid us in annihilating all that the labor and experience of ages have effected for our comfort.

How can sentiments so opposite as your's, my dear Miss W. on politics, and on the duties of the Hotel Dieu, find place in the same mind? Could I divest your work of its malign influence, I would bear with it for the sake of the passage I allude to. It inclines me much more to regret than to resent
the

the bias your principles have taken; it urges me to intreat you to weigh well the tendency of your speculative doctrines, and to do all in your power to repair the mischief you have at least attempted. Let us not be deprived of the pleasure we derive from your pen when properly employed. Let not political fury, like Aaron's rod, swallow up the other powers of your mind. In justice to yourself, remember you owe obedience for protection, that you are helpless, and a woman.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

2d Jan. 1793.

HAVING now, my dear madam, presented you with my sentiments on a variety of female topics, and animadverted on yours, respecting the French *convulsions*; for revolution is, I think, a term too expressive of order and regularity to be applied to modern Gaul, and its politics; allow me to intrude on your patience, while I consider the present posture of opinions and interests.

That there is a superintending Providence, who rules even our meanest concerns; that nothing is permitted but by his will; that he knows what is best for us, and that his mercy is equal to his justice, are points of faith, which we must

must be volunteers in wretchedness to abandon.—It is this belief that reconciles me to the stupendous scenes of violence and anarchy, which great part of Europe now presents : it is this that convinces me, that however I may deplore the fate of individuals, the general good is consulted in every event ; but the confidence with which it inspires me, does not abate the horror I feel, when I reflect on what is now passing in the councils, and more particularly in the breasts, of those who set up for reformers of the world. France being situated in the foreground of this theatre of devastation, naturally claims our first attention, nay she claims that of all the kingdoms and states on earth ; many of whom are undoubtedly waiting only to profit by her experience.—What a picture is it she exhibits !—what a race of beings has she produced !—are the furies let loose among them ? or are they striving to
concenter

concenter against themselves the whole vengeance of Heaven?—Are these the wise legislators, the cool disinterested patriots, the benevolent protectors of the wretched, that Miss Williams so extols?—Or are they not rather a set of madmen, whose frenzy can be humored with nothing but bloodshed and carnage? I am not fond of anticipating the divine will ; I look on the expectation of its avenging hand as blind presumption ; but in the instance of the French, I cannot but say, that if to break every law, divine or human, is to offend the Almighty, we must suppose them under his displeasure ; and if we regard rather their demerits than his patience, we can hardly suppose their punishment will be delayed, while the divine voice asks, ‘ Shall I not visit for these things? ’

A king dethroned, a constitution destroyed, innocence brought to the tribunal of the most impious men, wretches
 who

who glory in their impiety ; the service of God not only neglected, but his very existence denied ; are the claims of the new republic, to the applause and the imitation of the whole world. But, in their vehemence for glory, the French have widely departed from policy :— a very short time, a very little reflection will bring them, in the opinion of all who can think, to their true standard— they will no longer be giants in patriotism—they will appear what they really are, the enemies of the human race. Uncultivated fields carry no eloquence on their surface, to persuade us that they are a pleasant sight—famine may make men desperate, but never contented—the sword must be turned into a plough-share, or its edge is a curse. Of these truths, nothing short of the last conviction will make a nation of maniacs sensible ; and, unless Heaven in its mercy checks the progress of their delusion,

lusion, this last conviction our reformed neighbors seem destined speedily to receive.—That any that can open their eyes to a sense of their deviations, may arrive before they have imbrued their hands in regal blood, is more to be wished, for the sake of justice, than for the sake of the principal sufferer, whose sorrows, I sincerely hope, have fitted him for the worst destiny his savage tyrants can denounce ; and to whom a release from the miseries of a cruel world would be felicity.

Every one referring to the date of my letter, will perceive that it is written at a moment, nearly approaching a dreadful crisis—perhaps that crisis is already past—perhaps the last sad scene is over, and the spirit of the unfortunate Louis is dismissed to rest and peace.—In either case, what now, my dear madam, are your feelings?—I can hardly tell what mine would be in such a situation ; but
of

of this I am certain, that had my lips ever uttered, or my hand ever penned, a sentiment that could tend to bring the kingly authority into contempt, or to raise the minds of the Parisians against their sovereign, I should think myself accessary to his misfortunes ; and, in your particular instance, I should feel very awkward, should any one hereafter ask me, what business I had to intermeddle in the administration of a country in which I was a foreigner ?

May I never seek, may I never enjoy happiness at the expence of another ! but may I always retain enough of the discriminating faculty, to be sensible of a pre-eminence in blessings ! Who, that is not voluntarily blind, can disregard the amazing contrast between the situation of this country, and of one divided from us, by only a channel of seven leagues ? and who, that has a heart, can refrain from a grateful acknowledgment of Providential

vidential goodness.—Our enemies have tried their force against us to their own shame, and our advantage: by being compelled to exert our strength, we are strengthened: we enjoy, under a mild government, every comfort that life produces, or asks for—we have opportunities afforded us, by the inequalities themselves of which we complain, to shew whether we are virtuous or the contrary. In short, the inhabitants of Great Britain are in the actual possession of whatever can teach them to be grateful for blessings now bestowed, and sedulous for the attainment of those promised.

And yet, though this is a true picture of English happiness, though we are forced to confess, that whatever corrections our form of government may need, its faults are such as individuals are not oppressed by; we are so wearied of well-being, we so long for novelty, and are so desirous
of

of something to complain of, that we listen greedily to the first vagabond or enthusiast who will be at the pains of proving, by the grossest sophistry, that we are fools because we are content.

That the foremost of our advisers have neither reputation nor property at stake ; that in the common dealings of man with man, they have forfeited all credit—that from a want of previous information, it is fairly to be inferred, that they cannot reason accurately ; and though the experience of ages has proved the fallacy of all such delusions, and the interest or ambition of these reforming projectors, yet these are arguments of no avail with those who think novelty synonymous with happiness : such people must be made to *feel* their error ; for it is absolutely impossible to reason them out of it ; and even by this demonstration society in general would gain little ; for the next generation would stand in
just

just as much need of the same conviction.

I wish any one competent to the task, and who had opportunity of developing motives, and integrity to make them serviceable to mankind, would inform the world, by drawing up a history of the most remarkable and most popular revolutions in Europe. I fear much would be brought forward that few have imagined, and that such a stripping would leave many a daw in pitiable plight. Family pride has been, within your memory and mine, my dear madam, most grievously wounded, by an authentic and valuable publication of original memorials. I wish, sincerely, that every century sent forth the same *denouement*, that we might ascertain the true value of our Ruffels and Sidneys. In the meantime let me suggest an expedient, that, in my opinion, would much aid the good intentions of those who wish for

peace : let Sallust's Catiline war be translated into familiar English, let fair resemblances of character be pointed out to the notice of the commonalty, and it will convince, at least some of them, that these public-spirited gentry, the redressers of grievances, are not without private interests, or models, by which they fashion themselves.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

I HAVE heard it asserted, and the assertion has my hearty assent, that Christianity is not calculated to form a great man on the principles of ambition. It would be a contradiction almost in terms, if it were otherwise; for certainly ambition is no virtue in the eye of Christianity; and even the morality of those great actions which it has produced is very questionable. If murder be in itself a crime, the cause for shedding blood ought to amount to necessity, or it will still be criminal. If the property of another is sacred, we need an authority as incontestible as that of our duty itself, to give us a title to it.—As far as we can perceive, the plea of

ambition will not avail us much in our future justification of any violence, and, perhaps, when the mists of this world are cleared away, we shall not be greatly inclined to urge it.

The title of ambition to a place in the catalogue of virtues, seems at present a little weak, if we may judge by the substitution of *patriotism* for it; but whatever the appellation, the principle is the same. It was ambition that animated Mons. de la Fayette to become the champion of America, and the mobbing of Paris. This, I will confess to be an infinitely better impulse than that his successors have yielded to; but yet, if the French general's misfortunes and captivity have taught him that ambition is not a virtue, I congratulate him sincerely on his sufferings.

The christian duties are said to be easily defined; and the practice of them so incontestibly proves their simplicity,
that

that in most cases, wherever the conscience is bewildered, we may be assured we have departed from the great rule of our conduct, the light afforded us by Revelation. This was felt by the French reformers ; and as in their scale of merit they could place nothing higher than Ambition or Patriotism, call it which you please, they perceived that the basis of their merit being passion, religion was out of the question : to dispose of it was a difficulty—to annihilate it, required only hardihood : their former patriotic exercises had formed a climax wanting only this completion ; and to the astonishment of all the serious, to the joy of all the impious, and the comfort of all who wish for their destruction, they avow themselves, by the mouth of one of their orators, a nation of Atheists.

There is in the notions of all men who act on noble motives, a wariness, a tenacity of their own virtue and their own

reputation, that gives credit to their proceedings. Fearful that aught base or selfish should be imputed to them, they lay open to the world their principles and their practice; they are willing to be advised, they strive only to do right, and are thankful to those who will assist them. The contrary is observable wherever men are actuated by passion: if they know or suspect themselves to be wrong, they make up by positiveness for what is wanting in reason. None are so obstinate as those in fault, is an admitted truth; and every day's experience proves it. Unless something turns the hearts of the Parisians, the king's counsel may plead to eternity, and with every argument in their favor; but they cannot convince those who sit in judgment; for to be convinced would be destruction to their schemes; justice there is none amongst them; compassion they have long discarded, if
she

she ever shewed herself to any of them; and truth can have little chance of being heard, where religion has been shut out.

Few cases of contrariety of opinion occur, in which we do not grant something to the fallibility of human judgment and the imposition of the senses. I believe there are many in this country who are very honestly earnest for partial reformati^ons; but, with respect to those of France, I think, as far as public report and private information can enable me to judge, I cannot, by any logic, prove that there can be an honest man amongst the persecutors of the king of France, unless he be absolutely insane. There are points, on which all in their senses can judge if they please.—Every one knows that cruelty to innocence is injustice, that punishment ought to be proportioned to guilt, and that to inflict needless hardships, is to indulge a

savage spirit. None of the National Convention would, I suppose, chuse to enrol themselves as idiots or madmen—they therefore are, if in their wits, most culpable indeed.

But shall we women, my dear Miss W. who have no ambition to spur us, no sinister ends to promote, shall we take upon ourselves the odious character of ministers of vengeance?—Shall we neglect our own peace and happiness to spread a conflagration? No, surely; we prize too highly the privileges with which the age indulges our sex—it is permitted us to render ourselves as amiable as possible—we will not throw by the cestus to put on the helmet.

There is one consideration which should make all violent partisans reflect before they engage their exertions or their passions in any cause. We none of us know to what lengths we may be carried by party animosity and false opinions. No one can say how his
judg-

judgment may come off when specious argument is opposed to it; consequently, it is as difficult to secure our innocence. Nothing inflames the mind so much as faction, nothing intoxicates the senses so completely as the mask of virtue when worn by vice. We begin innocently, most probably ignorantly; and, relying for justification, on that which we are not aware we have forfeited, we retreat from the slaughter, in our ideas as guiltless as we entered the council—'Tis less than may be expected if we do not assume merit to ourselves for our criminal activity; but however we may for a time be blinded by fallacy and imposition, an hour of rectification will come, an hour that levels not only all distinctions of rank, but all inequalities of intellect, and what this hour will prove to the devastating legislators of the continent, I had rather any one should augur than myself.

If the Almighty did not permit an incredible perversion of judgment as the punishment of the refractory, I should be astonished that any argument should be required to teach men that peace is preferable to war, and that the safe enjoyment of every blessing of life is better than murder and rapine; but this is an age in which first principles must be proved, because they are disputed: human nature seems changed. *Homo homini lupus*, is an adage now verified beyond proverbial accuracy; the very bonds of society are giving way, and from the height of refinement we are fast precipitating into barbarism.

It has pleased Heaven to set before us an example, ere it is too late for us to profit by it. We see what is doing at a small distance from us: we can now pretty well judge, at least, what will *not* be the fruit of Gallic patriotism. May we be deterred by the lesson, instead of copying it!

L E T T E R XVI.

FEW instances have occurred to me, my dear madam, in which my feelings have been more sawed by indecision, than in the case of the fugitives from France. The first sentiment arising in the mind, on hearing even of their proscription, is compassion; and every one who makes the least pretensions to humanity, must feel himself inclined to open his very heart for the reception of these miserable beings. But the next whisper is that of caution, the next wish is for a power of discrimination; and the upshot of the debate with ourselves is that, in the case of the French fugitives, it is most difficult to determine how we ought to act. The liberality of

English benevolence, is a national characteristic that has ever been conspicuous; and recent claims on it have proved that it keeps pace with the increase of national wealth. I doubt not that *many*, I hope *all*, the refugees who have partaken of it, will evince their gratitude by their conduct; but while we relieve their necessities, let us, for our own sakes, remember that these persons bear little affinity to those who fled hither from the persecutions of the duke of Alva, or the crafty policy of Louis the fourteenth. In these religious proscriptions protestants sought shelter amongst protestants; and those who were willing to obey, took refuge with those who lived in a habit of obedience; but the case is far otherwise now. Opposition in religious opinions, provided they are tacit, God forbid that I, or any one, should make a plea for distrust; but here we are caressing persons of various descrip-

descriptions, a motley crew, most of whom must entertain principles entirely inimical to our form of government.—From this circumstance, my dear madam, if you are still a red-hot republican, you may derive hope ; but it makes me fear ; and with the honest purpose of making others fear, I ask their attention to the subject.

The government have done all that a government can do, to protect us from manual hostility ; but the tongue is often a more formidable enemy than the hand ; and we may suffer as certainly, though, perhaps, not so speedily, from the dissemination of opinion, as from any overt-act of violence.—From such of our unfortunate neighbours as left their country, when the first moderate set of reformers were forced to give ground, I apprehend little ; but the following convulsions of the volcano threw out a race of democrats, though probably not such

abettors of anarchy as those left behind : the next importation will be of those still a little deeper dyed ; and we shall at last, when they have made their situations at home untenable, be called on to house the Marats and Roberespierres. Even to these were they in misery, even to the wretch who boasts in our streets his bearing on a pike the head of the wretched Lamballe, even to the harpy of Richmond, who led her multifarious lovers through a deluge of blood to the axe, I would extend mercy, well convinced that vengeance is not mine ; but I would no more foster such miscreants, than I would warm the adder in my bosom, or fondle a young crocodile.

I have not general knowledge enough to judge, whether it is peculiar to our country ; but I am sure it is observable in us, that whatever sensation is excited, we run to extremes in its indulgence. Some years ago, a most uncharitable de-
testation

testation of the French was the raging fashion ; every body, and every sentiment was *antigallican*: latterly this hostile disposition has subsided, and it is succeeded by passionate regard in some people for the reigning oppressors of France, in others, for the oppressed. Little virtue can, according to my ideas, be ascribed to the former set of philanthropic patriots, much caution is to be exercised by the other. Universal benevolence is a phrase aptly suited to charm the vulgar : it is taken in the gross, undefined and unexamined ; but whoever attempts to practise it to any purpose, will, I fancy, find it a chimerical project, unless he begins with that minor species of charity—particular kindness. It is therefore incumbent on us, unless we would risque the censure of being partially unjust, to consider first the interests of those with whom *natural* bonds have connected us: our kindred, our country, and our fellow-

fellow-creatures claim, in succession, our regard and endeavors ; but should this order be inverted, should we espouse a foreign cause, in preference to that we seem born to defend ; should we boast our patriotism, when we neglect the relative duties, I question whether we should have any ground for self-approbation. Of this I am convinced, that to make political or metaphysical distinctions between right and wrong, is not half so easy or so safe as to discharge the simple offices of Christianity ; and that we stand a much better chance of pardon, if we err through a wish for peace, than if we disturb the world by eccentric deviations.

The situation of the Freuch emigrants, undoubtedly, interests all humanity in their afflictions ; but it does not require us to adopt their opinions, or to encourage the publication of them. Such as chuse to avow themselves the friends
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of good order, and whose practice is as peaceable as their tenets, are citizens every where ; but even you, my dear madam, must admit it as a complex absurdity to favor the endeavors of such as would annihilate that very distinction of ranks and classes, which has afforded them the means of relief, since I do not believe any leveller would venture to assert, that an Agrarian Law would leave any of us more than the unavailing wish, that the hand had aught to bestow.

It was asserted, by one of those great physicians of antiquity, from whose judgment there is no appeal, that every medicine bears with its medical salubrity a greater or less degree of poison ; and I have heard it affirmed, that we all bring into the world with us, that principle which is finally to dissolve our corporeal existence. The same contrariety of imperfection seems to subsist throughout the natural and moral world. Good can scarcely ever be produced without evil :

virtue

virtue is hardly exercised without the opposition of vice: the agent is generally the sufferer, and his reward is reserved for a purer region. That this observation is daily verified, by the ingratitude with which benevolence is requited, ought to be no argument with us against the use of it, because we are not to look for remuneration, or any thing but a trial of our virtue, from man; but surely it may teach us to be prudent; lest we arm him against us, who will deprive us of the farther means of doing good. ‘Be pitiful, be courteous’, is the injunction of the apostle.—‘Be ye wise as serpents’, said our Saviour, when he recommended to our imitation the harmlessness of the dove.—Let us then be kind, in the largest sense of kindness, to our distressed fellow-creatures for conscience’ sake, not because our passions are inflamed, like Dido’s, with the recital of disasters.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

WITH those who wish to excite discontent, one standing argument is the necessity of reformation in the several departments of government. Without pretending to any knowledge of the abuses complained of, I may venture to suppose the suggestion well founded, because I see no department in any species of government where reformation is not wanting; and it may fairly be concluded, that when the integral parts are defective, the whole cannot be perfect; but it is curious to observe, that in the true spirit of Swift's Wonder of Wonders, where all the painful miracles were to be proved by the corporeal suffering of the spectators, the reformation
pointed

pointed out by the new-modellers, does not in the smallest degree affect themselves. The corrupt distribution of national wealth is exclaimed against by those who would be glad to share it; and the misuse of power is pointed out by the most notoriously ambitious: they are the profuse and needy who clamor for equal distributions; they are the lowest orders who would abolish rank; they are, of all descriptions, those who must gain by confusion that wish to promote it; but not a word is urged in favor of that justice which would render them conduits, rather than receivers; not a reason can be suggested that does not prove their patriotism selfishness.— And yet, notwithstanding all the experience gained from time and history, these projectors are so blind to what they do not chuse to see, that they never suspect their purposes and their motives are visible!

Admit-

Admitting that great states and little states, states of society and states of solitude, all stand woefully in need of reformation, I leave those of the more powerful sex to manage the public improvements; and, in the mean time, shall beg leave to point out to my own sex, some particulars under our proper cognizance which need the same discipline.

The growth of luxury is, I believe, generally confessed to be an evil; and if so, it is of frightful magnitude in our country.—If therefore we would rank as patriots, we ought to endeavor at its suppression or correction; and this is a task not more than a phalanx of females is in some measure equal to; but to set about it with any prospect of success, the evil must be clearly understood.

Luxury can never, except with reference to the ruin it produces, be considered as a cause. It is an effect, produced partly by an influx of national wealth, and partly by a criminal relaxation

ation in the discharge of the moral duties. Riches, though luxury is said to be their natural offspring, have no necessary affinity with it, since they have rendered many a man parsimonious; but the other cause is much more clearly allied to it. Relaxation of mind makes every one seek for indolent ease at any expence; relaxation of moral principles makes them tolerate in others what they fancy to be necessary to their own happiness. Self-indulgence is aimed at by all: it is found easier to gratify than to correct those dispositions that tend to it: the mind, as well as body, grows enervated; we consult the palate of caprice instead of appealing to our reason; and fancying that we are enjoying perfect liberty, become slaves to our own desires.

In times, as licentious as those we live in, it will be deemed almost profane to lament the want of subordination; yet, from the want of it, many much more
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accurate reasoners than myself have traced most of the miseries now existing. Certainly, in spite of all the nonsense talked about equality, and the dignity of man, a conviction that society could not subsist without subordination had a very wholesome tendency—it disposed the lower classes to be content in their several vocations. Instead of the ambition which now makes them emulous of the rank above them, and unhappy in that assigned them, their highest aim was to maintain their situation, and to enable their children to obtain it. In short, subordination taught us all that we had places, and that others had rights; and as it was a necessity not confined to the peasantry, the yeomanry, or even to the gentry, but subsisting in all the several gradations of rank, it was thought neither hardship nor disgrace. There was a *quid pro quo* for every man; there was a station provided for every member of a community; and if there were not
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for the younger folks, the brilliant enjoyments that we misname pleasure, these were not for their parents those multitudinous anxieties which now distract almost all in that relative situation.

When the sons and daughters of the gentry found honorable employments in the castles of the nobility, the younger branches of a family were without difficulty provided for, while the paternal estate was transmitted, with little dismemberment, to the eldest son; but now that no man will be any man's *servant*, and every Miss considers her father's nominal purse as a passport and introduction to all the refinements of those in a higher class, it is most painfully difficult to find occupations for young men, or to satisfy the thirsty vanity of young women.—As there is no distinction in modes of education, all are equally fit for every thing, all aspire to one level: there is therefore a dreadful desertion
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in the middle ranks of life, and as unpleasant an overplus in the upper ones. 'The courtier's kibe' is no longer galled: he is *justled*, and woe betide him if he dare resent the intrusion.

Domestic subordination is nearly as obsolete as that in the classes of society. What would any one now think of the portrait drawn by Erasmus, of a lad of his time, who waited on his parents at dinner, and then sat down to his own?—I do not wish a restoration of this species of subjection; but I heartily dislike the excessive licence that has taken its place. If we ask, who are the persons that now bear most influence in the world? it may be fairly answered, Those under twenty years of age: the pride, the the foolish emulation of parents renders them slaves to their children, and leads, in a constant and regular gradation, to the ruin of both parties.

In the relation of master and servant, the fashion of the world has almost inverted

verted the meaning of the terms. We are all now so far at the mercy of our domestics, that we forfeit with their favor that of the world. Even in the middle rank of persons, such as can just afford to maintain others for the necessary offices of life, œconomy must be given up, or they must submit to much obloquy.—The nicety of a kitchen-table must exceed that sought for in the parlor, or murmurs, reproach, and insult follow: the price of labor in the fashion of wages is in my memory almost doubled; not that the value of money is so much decreased, but because ideas are afloat, and necessities created, which a few years ago were not in existence.—Nor is this refinement in menial manners and wants, confined either to the metropolis or its environs. The mountains of Wales, the fells of Westmoreland, the highlands of Scotland, all experience it in a greater or less degree, so that the prudent
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dent parsimony of our grandfathers and grandmothers, when the one took Roger from the plough-tail to curry a horse, and the other brought Alice from the butter-churn to brighten the knocker, is now no example.

I shall be thought, my dear madam, not only by you, but by every votary of modern liberty, more barbarous than Goth or Vandal, when I reprobate the communication of our enjoyments to the lower orders of the community; but in the certainty that no misanthropic acrimony influences me, I shall find a refuge from all the shafts of censure. I would ask those who pride themselves on their liberality, or carelessness in their domestic arrangements, whether they find their servants either morally better, more contented, or in any one essential point benefited by their master's or mistress's profusion. 'They provide better for themselves when they quit us,' is the an-

swer. 'They marry, engage in trade, and 'often make 'a figure.' I grant it, if glitter is substantial comfort; but in my opinion, the old fashioned way in which a couple of married servants took a farm and brought up a family, was far preferable to the present mode of tricking up a shop, and figuring—in the Gazette.

I remember being present, a few years ago, at a magnificent public spectacle, where the sight of the royal family was one incentive, and the price of admission had been calculated; O how vain the attempt! to render the assembly select.—Not experiencing that fascination in public amusements, which enchains the soul, and engrosses the faculties, I was at leisure to observe on the various groups around me; and my attention was particularly claimed by one, consisting of about fifteen or twenty females of a singular and almost undescribable appearance.

ance. Their head attire was as uncouth as solicitude and extravagance could render it.—Last year's fans sawed the air without grace or effect in their rigid fingers; the rest of their drefs had acquired something in lieu of gloss; and their whole deportment, though varying, bespoke the extremity of awkwardness. In some I remarked the affectation of ease and fashionable *non-chalance*; in others, there was the vulgar vacancy of open-mouthed astonishment; but to do them justice, in most there predominated that downcast timidity which indicates uneasiness in a new situation. On enquiry, I learnt that these nymphs were the attendant spirits of an equal number of ladies then present, who, in their liberality to their domestics, had treated them with this spectacle. I could not but commend even the shadow of goodness; but, at the same time, I was convinced that this ostensible kindness had made

several of the group at the moment of enjoyment feel very uncomfortable; and when I reflected on what would be necessary to divest those most gratified of the foreign ideas this introduction to splendor had infused into their minds, I was satisfied, that though it might be philanthropy, it was not beneficence.

There is an apparently trivial circumstance in manners, from which it is thought many important consequences have flowed; this is the waving all distinction in dress. It is an alteration none can consistently condemn who prefer ease to parade; and I am sure no one more heartily enjoys it than I do, as it really promotes cleanliness, it saves fruitless trouble, and leaves us the free use of our joints, without concern for the safety of our garments. But certainly those are not to be despised as absurd reasoners, who say, that from this relaxation has followed that of manners.—In
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public, it produces that mixture of company, that divides the attention between the spectacle and ourselves. As no one is now externally known, many are unjustly suspected; and as those who *have* rights are the only persons not disposed to contend for them, the discouragements to encounter the ferocity of a mixed multitude are such, as make absolute renunciation of pleasure the more tolerable—But this must not be complained of, because it is an evil of equality. It is to me one proof, that the only effect of an endeavor to adjust the balance in society, would be, that the scale which now preponderates would then kick the beam.

LETTER XVIII.

I Have slightly hinted, in the preceding letter, that the independent spirit of the age we live in, augments the difficulty of providing for the younger branches of a family—it is a subject worth considering; and, with your leave, my dear madam, as it equally affects both sexes, we will pause on it.

A narrow income, and a large family, are antipathies human patience and fortitude often fail in endeavoring to reconcile; but which too frequently are found together.—Supposing the elder son of a gentleman to have so much antiquated moderation as not to ruin his father, and beggar the family by the extravagances
of

of his minority, difficulties enough remain to make any man serious. The professions are all overstocked, by the yeomanry educating their sons at the university, instead of in the field, and on the threshing floor : every dependant situation we allow to be rejected : what then remains, but trade, as a means of subsistence ? Here the decreased value of money makes it necessary, that a parent should apprentice his son with a sum, more than equal, perhaps, to the whole of the family property : the mode of life amongst these nurslings of commerce cannot be supported at a trifling expence ; and when the young man is out of his apprenticeship, it is found, that in almost any trade, which the son of a gentleman would embark in, a capital is required that would enable him to retire from it. Borrowed money supplies this want for the present : his situation soon becomes critical ; sometimes it succeeds, often it

fails ; and the suite of events I do not chuse to trace.

There is one consolation, and I am sure there is need of one thousand, to counterbalance the agonising anxiety with which great commercial concerns are now attended ; and this is that failure is not, or ought to be, indiscriminately regarded as opprobrious. The traders of this country now form a chain of speculatists, so linked with each other, that ruin often reaches them from a remote quarter, and without the smallest impeachment of their integrity : yet still it is a stigma, and, as such, ought to be carefully avoided.

Nor are the difficulties less, or the encouragements greater, in rearing a numerous family of the other sex, without affluence of fortune. Indeed, the possibility of enabling daughters to assist in the maintenance of a family, is now so barred, that it is almost wholly laid aside,
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and they consequently increase instead of diminishing the burthen. Brought up, in general, far above their stations, seeking situations they were never designed for, and trusting wholly to their attractions for a settlement in the world, their attention, while youth and hope support their spirits, is bestowed wholly on their persons; and, in the decline of life, they take their place in that most pitiable class of beings, those who are only admitted and borne with, out of regard to connexions no longer subsisting, and remembrance of what they have been.

It is a truth, of which young people will never be convinced, that in seeking immoderate enjoyment, they wound their own interests: this disbelief we forgive to them on the plea of inexperience; but can that be urged by their parents, when they deny what is no less easy to prove, that it is the idle notion of liberty,

and the desire of independence, notions and desires, which they themselves propagate and encourage; to which they are indebted for half the misery they complain of? The farmer's son must be a parson; the liberal professions send ensigns into the guards; the trader's darling must be a gentleman; and misses, of all descriptions, must be ladies.— Would not the plough, the desk, or the counter, be more proper to the sons of those who have raised their fortunes by them?

There is another cause of distress, in the provision for a family, to which few advert: the country is depopulated to enlarge the too great bulk of the metropolis; thus the number of persons out of employment with us is increased, and their chances for success diminished. But even this arises from no other source than a desire of shaking off the restraints on pleasure, *alias*, a modern hankering
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after that destructive liberty, the liberty of being ruined our own way.

This spirit of migrating towards the metropolis is owing, I imagine, in a great degree to its direct contrary, the passion for rambling from it, which is now universally felt, and almost as universally indulged by every individual of this city and its environs. The fancied salubrity, and the real pleasure, of a trip to the sea-coast, entice thousands, every summer and autumn, to exchange the conveniences and comforts of home, for the miseries of a crowded watering-place : hamlets, but a few years since scarcely known but to the sea-fowl, are now explored and elevated into politeness : the fisherman bribed to lend his hut, is repaid in his circumstances by his gains ; but never in his peace, if his sons and daughters are allured by the prodigality and ostentation of his tenants, to change the private innocence of their obscurity

for the obtruding danger that awaits the novice in London.

Simplicity is a characteristic that will soon be lost to Great Britain. As the rage for country excursions increases, the country becomes more diffusively known. I tremble for the cottagers of Westmoreland, now that every jaunting party find it indispensibly necessary to their politeness to visit the lakes. Should the western isles of Scotland come into fashion, I know not where, in our country, simplicity will hide her head. Her influence, little prized while enjoyed, will be little missed when withdrawn; but ignorance of misfortune is an imaginary alleviation of it, and whoever knows what *refinement* produces, will regret the absence of its opponent.

A spirit of emulation is now almost universally carested as the evidence of a *vigorous* mind, and such it undoubtedly is; but it is not always a proof of a
virtuous

virtuous mind. As it stands opposed to turpitude and baseness of all denominations, it is laudable ; but when it arises from restless discontent, it is but a liberal species of envy ; and should therefore be very cautiously encouraged in young people. Cultivated, as it now is, by the street processions of the lowest schools, and the various exhibitions of the higher, it must, nine times in ten, increase a parent's cares, by elevating the ideas of a child above its situation.

In contemplating the refinements of the age, I cannot but ask myself, what hope there is of the next ? *Young gentlemen* have long since begun to spurn those occupations which carry a badge : whence then are the useful trades to be supplied with apprentices ? we shall have abundance of silver-smiths, print-merchants, and linen-drapers ; but where shall we find the more necessary callings ? none but the lowest of the people will condescend

condescend to bake or brew for us, and natural poverty will hinder their success, when they would cease to be servants.

It is curious to observe the striking contrast formed between the conduct of a shop-keeper of fifty years' standing, and his *young gentleman* of one-and-twenty. The master will often carry a cumbersome parcel; the man can convey nothing that may not be squeezed into his pocket: the master rises from his dinner at every call; the man will come when he is more at leisure. The contagion of example pervades first a street, then a neighbourhood, and then the whole town: the young candidates for professions will accept none that have not the privilege of ease; and thus they circumscribe their own and their parents' choice.

A hundred stronger arguments, than any my imagination suggests to me, might be adduced, to prove that this,
and

and many other evils, originate in what we do not consider as an evil, a spirit of discontent. Let it be encouraged a little farther, and as all defects are most visible when caricatured, this will equally, by its absurdity and its mischief, teach us to teach others to be satisfied.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

OF all specious attempts, that at reformation is the most specious; and, if pursued as it has in most instances been, it is the most fallacious. We, perhaps, see an error, and seriously wish to correct it; we are earnest in our first endeavours, but, discouraged by impediments, we are soon wearied; the project is considered as futile, and want of perseverance renders the plan really abortive: of this, my dear madam, you will not require proof, if you advert to the exertions made to obtain respect for the Sabbath, and to enforce the other salutary purposes of the proclamation for the correction of manners.

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It is a great misfortune, that in such laudable endeavours, those who take the right track are soon disheartened—those who could effect more, begin their work at the wrong end, and the remainder of the community form, some by their indifference to all things serious, and others by their hatred to all morality, an opposition to both these classes.

Nothing is easier than to form an ideal system of resumed virtue—nothing is more difficult than to carry it into practice. Luxury bears about her so many radiant attractions, that all feel her influence, and would unwillingly retreat from it to the inconveniences of primitive simplicity. Voluntary self-denial is an obsolete virtue; and he must be righteous for righteousness' sake, who could so brave the world as to attempt its renovation; yet, to attempt a reform on any other principle, or by any other means, would be to stand a candidate for disappointment.

It is not the adjusting the number of members of either house—it is not the abolition of the slave trade, or the raising the lower clergy to the rank that will enable them to employ an additional set of beings, as wretched as they have been; it is not the vigilant apprehension of criminals, nor is it all these together, that can constitute a reformation in this country. A much more simple, but equally arduous course, is prescribed to us by common sense: let all those, who serve as examples to others, be careful what example they set them—and let none betray the interests of the community, to indulge their own ostentation, or buy a character.

If our nobility would, in the first place, consult the decalogue and the comment on it, contained in the New Testament, and frame their conduct by them, they would then be fit reformers in their own families, and in the circle of their influence.

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If they permitted no breach of the laws of God or man, if they discouraged, by their own practice, all that delicacy which serves but to enervate ; and if they entered into a combination which afforded no harbor with them for idleness or profligacy, their own morals would be improved, and the higher class of servants would soon be reformed ; a reformation none can think unnecessary, who recollect how numerous and how insolent this order of gentry is at present.

The middle rank of society are thought by speculatists the best-conditioned. I fear it is equally true, that it is they who spread the corruption of manners the most diffusively. The centre is the commanding situation, and those who are placed in it uniting too frequently the high and low follies, are the most dangerous members of a community with respect to example. These must lay aside their emulation, their desire to ape the great,

great, as well as to indulge with the little; or, however laudable their wishes and intentions, they must do mischief in a greater degree than those who have more power; for the commonalty would be instantly deterred, if excited to imitate the superior orders; but the distinction between a shop-keeper and a merchant is now so nice, that the extravagances of Portland-place are easily transplanted into Cheapside or the Minories.

To expect reformation to begin with the vulgar, is to wait for what never can happen. While the grosser appetites are to be indulged, the ignorant will never neglect them to form theories and systems.—Good must be struck out from virtue; it must be such good as the multitude will embrace, or we may preach ourselves hoarse, and write ourselves blind, to no purpose. If all who could purchase the assistance of their fellow-creatures

creatures would make their election only of such as merited encouragement, there would soon be an end of idleness and profligacy amongst the laboring poor: but now, when the profane and the drunken, the indolent and the brutal, are equally employed—it is scarcely worth any man's trouble to be a Christian.

The associations lately formed in defence of our persons and property, against republicans and plunderers, and which I cannot expect you, my dear madam, to commend, have proved that this kind of selection might be made. Many cities and corporations have resolved not to employ persons disaffected to the government. Would it not be as easy and as practicable to proscribe all persons disaffected to the interests of morality? It is not necessary to scrutinize into the interior of every man's house, to know how far he does his duty:

duty: let us but resolve not to encourage those who *appear* to desert it, and we should then effect a *glorious revolution* indeed.

That some measure like this is loudly called for, the increasing licentiousness of the plebeian classes demonstrates. I cannot ask you, my dear madam, to observe with me the change which has taken place within these few years in our streets; but I feel it impossible, with any degree of comfort, or even security, to walk in London, unprotected by a gentleman. The levelling principle has rendered all persons, making an appearance at all above the common rank, obnoxious to the most galling abuse, and often to personal insult. Those who, from necessity or habit, have learnt to make their way intrepidly, may brave it, and must do it, or stay at home; but as health is my only motive for using pedestrian exercise, I have found it so irksome lately,

lately, that I leave the *pavé* to the democrats.

It is, I hope, no uncharitable sentiment, to wish the working part of the community knew just enough of indigence to teach them industry. If this cannot be effected, we shall, in a short time, find that very few days of the week are not days of rest. The price of labor is complained of as inadequate to that of provision; but it should be remembered, that there are many trades, of which the journeymen will work only for such a space of the week as shall afford them a maintenance. How are these people employed in the intervals, is a question worth investigating.

The manner in which the infant poor are brought up and educated, is, surely, an object of national concern, and very imperfectly provided for by those seminaries called charity-schools, which are too often left to the management of such

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as are not competent to adjust their regulations, or who have too great an interest in the various articles of their consumption, to think of any thing else. The only proof the public have, or ask for, that their donations are well bestowed, is the bawling of the responses, or the screaming hallelujahs, once in seven days: but let any one observe charity children, who, between the school hours, are returned to their home; let their behaviour in the streets be watched, and particularly their ingenious modes of execration listened to (if any body can listen to them), and no farther hint of the necessity of reformation in this department of public tuition will be necessary. Would not the inspection of those for whose service these young creatures are designed, have some good effect on such institutions? Could a neighbourhood of ladies be better employed than in alternately visiting these miseries of virtue or of vice?

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I entertain the most sanguine hopes of the good to be produced by that noble public work projected by the Philanthropic Society. It is striking at the root of evil, to take away temptation to it with one hand, and to hold out encouragement to good with the other. To save the young is charity, still more efficacious than to succour the aged:—the latter are in a great measure provided for by a variety of munificence. If they have peace, and food, and raiment, their earthly needs are nearly supplied; but these blessings, great as they are, must be confessed very inadequate to the wants of youth. The active principle of the mind must be found in employment; the attention must have an object, or misery awaits us, whether we are born to poverty or affluence. This blessing of a pursuit and occupation is the principal characteristic of this institution. Others profess it, and practise

it in a very commendable degree; but the scale on which the Philanthropic Society set out, tends to form more active citizens than any other. I sincerely wish they may meet every pecuniary encouragement; and then my only anxiety will be, lest their zeal should relax, or a change in their administration should make an alteration in their œconomics.

While I am on the subject of public education, give me leave, my dear madam, to say a few words respecting an institution now much patronised; I mean the Asylum for female orphans. It is a most benevolent charity, and I doubt not has saved many of our sex from destruction; but there are in the mode of conducting it some errors that I heartily wish to see corrected. Too much of the real interest of the children is sacrificed to obtaining the means of their maintenance. Their chapel is so much a scene of exhibition, that it almost ceases to be
a place

a place of devotion. The custom of exposing the girls to the broad stare of all the congregation, without the protection of a hat, may increase the collection; but I am certain it gives a degree of confidence, that a female ought, in the early part of life, to be a stranger to. The dependance on the vocal powers of these children, is an evil of the same kind. Why was Ranelagh or Vauxhall thought on when the gallery was fitted up, and a distinction allotted to the principal performers, that must put every auditor in mind of that which has no relation to the place, or to any thing serious?

It is in places such as these, it is in work-shops, in families, in our own houses, our own heads, and our own hearts, that we should endeavour to produce a revolution. The government would want little reformation, if that of public manners could be effected: till it

is, we must be patient under evil, and zealous for whatever is good; but do not let us add to our absurdities and follies, that of fancying, that to promote discord is to insure happiness.

LETTER XX.

WITH this letter, my dear madam, I will close my appeals to your patience. If it is not exhausted, give me leave to expatiate a little on the crisis at which I conclude.

That the avenging hand of the Almighty is stretched out most awfully over a great part of the terraqueous globe, is a truth, I believe, better founded than in gloomy superstition or fanatical prejudice. That collectively and individually we have merited its chastisement, few will be confident enough to deny. Whether we, as a nation, are destined to feel it, is a secret reposed in the breast of Omniscience.

May I be permitted, without danger of presumption, to conjecture that the de-

stroying angel has been stayed to give us a pause for a repentance, and to strengthen our purposes of amendment?—To adopt the idea, if a proper use be made of it, can do us no harm.

Without looking with a jealous eye on the bounty of Providence, I cannot but tremble at the idea of excessive prosperity. With respect to myself I have ever found it momentous; the sentiment of perfect happiness has with me constantly been the harbinger of something at least unpleasant; and it was but a very few weeks after I had once boasted that I had not a wish ungratified, that my nervous system suddenly gave way, and I was made to feel my immediate dependance on the will of Heaven. Such tranquillity has this country for some years enjoyed, and such complacency has it expressed: perhaps we both were negligent in paying our tribute of gratitude to our benefactor.

I have

I have before asserted it, and every day's experience does but the more confirm me in my opinion, that, however we may dread hardship before it arrives, or however we may complain of distress when ourselves are involved in it, a certain portion of mental uneasiness must hang about our hearts, to keep our heads quiet. It is in all things, in pain of body and inquietude of mind, in natural and moral evil, the major only that fixes our attention ; we are insensible to hunger when benumbed with cold, in excessive sorrow we are ignorant of personal suffering, and if those beloved by us claim our sympathy, we are scarcely conscious of any thing respecting ourselves. It is exactly so with regard to public affairs. When I first knew what was meant by politics and government, the American war was the universal topic of discourse ; the disgust it occasioned concentrated all political feeling and passion, and as our situation drew nearer to a

crisis, there was enough to occupy men's minds, without feigning calamity or projecting revolutions. The war was concluded; we soon recovered breath after our contest, and the government, finding their conduct kept opposition within due bounds, and that there were few foreign calls on their attention, employed their time, O how vainly ! in the futile endeavour to make us easy and happy at home. Commerce was seen to flourish to a height never before witnessed : population increased, the necessities of government diminished, and the public burthens were lightening ; when on a sudden, while we were repining at the want of something to murmur at, the demon of revolution stalked forth among us, and having seen the ruin of the French Monarchy, without one advantage resulting from the suppression of the kingly power, we, who have neither their grievances to complain of, nor their genius to plead in excuse, must imitate
what

what ought to have deterred us, and have revolutions, reformations, and massacres of our own.

How undeserving do we shew ourselves of the uncommon felicity we enjoy in this happy country, where nature offers us every thing that can delight, and art and industry whatever can chear life, if, instead of being sensible of these inestimable privileges, we murmur, because the course of the world is not changed to suit our personal convenience or caprice! How ignorant do we evince ourselves of the conditions on which we were sent into this world, if we desire that every trial of our patience and fortitude should be removed!:

The popular cry is for the relief of the lower orders of society; but I would only ask this fair question, who is it that feels most the errors of government? I deny that it is the poor, it is the middle rank of life; it is those who cannot, from their situations, live without the aid

of the subordinate classes, and who are made severely to feel the licentiousness of the poor ; at the same time that the false notions of the world oblige them to give up nearly all the comforts of their state of mediocrity.

I have granted, that there is even in this country abundant room for reformation ; but whether the degradation of monarchy, or the erecting the standard of confusion, would in the least promote so desirable an end, is a question none but a French democrat would think worth an answer. I trust in the providence of Heaven, that we shall be restrained from making the insane experiment ourselves, or permitting it to be made for us, by a set of people who can have no other motive than envy and fear for their officious interference.

I shall never cease wondering at the delusion of the world, while I see those arguments used with any success, which have so often been proved by their consequences

sequences fallacious. I believe it is decreed by Heaven, that worldly experience shall be of no efficient avail in our worldly conduct. Young people are ruined now by those arts that ensnared their grandfathers; vice is propagated by the sophistry that hundreds on the gallows have exposed; we chuse to be cheated though warned of it at the moment, and though our Gallic neighbours are now, by their sufferings, condemning their own folly, we are advocates and candidates for a share in their misfortunes.

There will be in this, and all other countries, a class of desperate men, whom their own profligacy has ruined, and who must therefore build all their hopes on the plunder of the nation. How to distinguish such patriots from thieves at a fire, requires more accurate powers than I possess: but are such men to be our rulers?—Am I, because a miscreant who

has neither interest nor credit in the world, whose conduct excludes him from all reputable society, and whose crimes render him furious—because such a man tells me we are slaves, am I to give up all I hold dear in the world to obtain that licentious freedom which would lead me to perdition?—And how would the wretch look on me when I had been so duped?—with the contempt and execration I deserved.

I sincerely wish, my dear madam, that your added observation may have effected a revolution in your revolution principles. I flatter myself you must now have seen enough of Paris' furor to shock your delicacy and wound your feelings, and that a little subsequent reflection will convince you that the toleration of some evils is preferable to violent and uncertain modes of correcting them.

Thank Heaven the native spirit of our country has warded the blow recently aimed

aimed at the vitals of our peace, and I doubt not the energy, by which we were saved, will be succeeded in the minds of all temperate persons, by that cool caution which will render abortive all future attempts against us. The heroes that were to have given liberty and happiness to this island by the murder of one half of its inhabitants, and the subjugation of the other, are now hastening to prove, by their flight, what was their design. If they had no inimical purpose; if their cause was as good as they would have us believe; if their zeal was as great as the genius of liberty demands; if they came hither only because here alone they could find refuge, why will they not longer indulge us with their society? Why are they in such haste?—Why was it remarked that four hundred departed in one day, when they found the Alien Bill could not be impeded by the vociferations of the better sort of Gallo-anglicans,
or

or by their pious endeavors to inflame the minds of the multitude?—Surely the presence of the vivacious, polite, agreeable, *sans souci* Frenchmen, might have helped our phlegmatic spirits through a winter which promises little of the hilarity of chearful weather.

Peace to them, and to all the wretched nations towards which such turbulent beings turn their fostering cares! I hope what we have effected here; will prove a security to all they shall curse with their insidious friendship, and that it will please Heaven to spare those who have piety enough to detest a set of wretches, whose first principle is hostility with providence.

If that change, my dear madam, has taken place in your mind, which I flatter myself with fancying, it will now be a consolation to you that you have done no harm, and cannot now do any; but still I cannot but expect some atonement
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from you. A candid renunciation of your political principles, a confession that you did not, when you espoused the cause of France, see to what their madness tended, will raise you higher in the estimation of the world than even all your literary productions; and to this generous conduct I hope you will be induced, because I can assure you, that you will find in London such a degree of caution, that many of your former connections will be shy of entering with you on your favorite topic—French Liberty.

And here, my dear Miss Williams, I bid you farewell. It remains only for me to say to the world, that in these pages, written as my precarious health and uncertain leisure permitted, without the smallest wish for any of the usual gratifications of authorship, I speak my genuine sentiments, founded on diligent observation and common sense, and that I have no other aim in making them
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public, than that of promoting the peace of my country, and rendering the intellectual powers of my countrywomen more useful, and their tempers more amiable.

P O S T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

WHILE the foregoing opinions and strictures have been printing, almost every day has exhibited a new face of public affairs ; and almost every hour has, by its unexpected productions, convinced me still more forcibly of the truth I set out with asserting, that we women are, by our modes of education, and still more by our limited intellectual powers, precluded from a share in political questions. But lest some, in whom the present fashion of the world has excited a spirit of emulation, and a wish to attempt every thing, should feel hurt
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at this abridgment of their course, let me beg *them* (for you, my dear Miss Williams, I cannot suppose so entire a convert as to attend to me in this particular) to look carefully round them, and observe how much real cause there is for our patient acquiescence in natural necessity ; and how much gratitude we owe to Him who formed us, if not to soar in the higher regions of the celestial concave, yet to wing our way smoothly, gliding in an orbit of innocence and of security.

The most sceptical cannot surely deny, that, however elevation may be coveted by the ignorant, it is to be dreaded by the wise. He, who has small powers, must be content with small praise ; but the contrary does not universally hold good. Neither our own virtue, nor our own reputation, is always increased according to the extent of our capacity : it far more commonly happens, that the
extension

extension of our influence renders it pernicious; and it almost, without exception, diminishes the good opinion of the world towards us.—Naturally jealous, mankind look on each other with a degree of malignity proportioned to the distance any one has out-gone his competitors: every step of the foremost is watched; every impediment is obtruded; every slip is remarked, and prognosticated to be fatal. The spirit of a man contending for the rewards of a manly mind, for power, for wealth, for the promotion of those interests dearest to him, may and must sustain all these discouragements; but the spirit of a woman, supported by vivacious impulse, more than by steady vigour, could ill brook the conflict; and still less will the incentive to engage in it appear, if the benefits of the attainment be duly weighed.

In the whole course of my observation, I never could perceive any privilege

vilege at all desirable, annexed to the situations most aspired after by the world. I am sure great wealth renders no man richer than an easy competency. We cannot spend immeasurably on ourselves: nature there has bounded us by fixing the dimensions of our persons, the extent of our real wants, and our perception of real necessities. All beyond what is needful is superfluous; and unless disposed of to purchase the pleasures of benevolence, I must say is troublesome.—I have an income no greater than is just sufficient, with œconomy, to furnish me with the comforts of life; but I do not perceive that such of my friends as have ten times more, are at all richer. They too must set some bounds to their expenditure, or they, like me, might exceed their pecuniary ability; so that the restriction on us is equal. The only difference is, that we act on a scale of different dimensions. The superfluity of their wealth occasions them abundance
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of trivial employment, it perhaps purchases them some casual pleasures; but oftener it brings vexation and difficulty: it subjects them to imposition and ingratitude; it ruffles their tempers, and disturbs their peace. I cannot therefore see any reason for envying them their riches.

But there is something soothing to the social principle, something plausible and captivating in the idea of possessing that power, which shall enable us to administer to the wants of our fellow-creatures; and as, with a disposition to make so good an use of them, little positive harm can ensue to us, we may perhaps, in the frailty of our nature, be pardoned, when we repine at a purse too scanty for the necessities of the distressed; but with respect to the power which results from an elevated situation, the good of it is overbalanced by so much evil; there is so little to be effected, and so much to be

be dreaded, that the wish for it, however innocent, must be condemned for its folly. We are certainly not only permitted, but urged, by the instinct implanted in us, to regard our own personal interests in the first place. I do not mean those interests which the world considers as the most important. I mean our highest and best interests, our integrity here, and our well-being hereafter. Now no man, as far as I can observe, is obliged, by any law of conscience or morality, to endanger either the one or the other ; and that both are endangered by superiority of situation, is a point easily proved.

The wider our path, the more difficult is it to walk in a right line. If we are not *tempted* to quit it, we may not have discernment enough to discover it, or perseverance to continue in it. In the exercise of power of all kinds, the same difficulty occurs ; and he who trusts
solely,

solely, either to his own intention, or his own judgment, will not fail to err. To have the power of life and death over our fellow-creatures, is a privilege that makes one shudder; to decide on their property is no pleasant office; but to conduct their interests, complex, jarring, and often diametrically opposite; to ascertain how much of individual evil is requisite for the general good; to ward off the attacks of other communities, and to seize every advantage offered by accident or circumstances; to effect all this with an unrepublishing conscience, and to convince those, for whose sake even the comforts of existence are forfeited, that the person so acting is not their covert and most dangerous enemy, is a task fitted only to the utmost native energy of mind, fortified and improved by every possible aid of corporal strength and intellectual tuition.

Who, that considers this attentively, but must laugh at the idea of a woman
assuming

assuming this office?—an Atlas in petticoats, is not a more ridiculous idea.— Yet what is it we pretend to, when we take on ourselves to advise a people for their good, or in other words to decide on their policy?—It may be said that there have been female heads, female hearts, and female constitutions competent to all the fatigues of jurisprudence; that women have governed kingdoms and their rulers, with credit and with wisdom. Few, very few, are the instances; for in the case of female monarchy it will be found, that the female character bears with it all its infirmities, and that it is the advisers who rule it; and in the case of female ascendancy, it is pretty evident that it gains its reputation, and produces its effect, only by adding its peculiar properties to those of the more powerful sex.

Power must be defined, before it can be denominated good or evil; and it is
certain,

certain that it wears, at different times, a very different aspect. When we see a nation or a country made happy by the exercise of it, we consider it as an enviable prerogative ; but when we perceive it exerted in the slaughter of the human species, and having for its aim nothing but an universal chaos, who would desire to partake it? who would not rather decline it, if offered? Unhappy indeed are they, who are compelled, by sex and situation, to take an active part in society, when the end of their exertions is doubtful, when no man can say ‘I will do justice,’ or promise himself that he will not be guilty of oppression.

From all the perplexities of human interests, from all the harrowing of indecision, all the danger of becoming guilty through vice or error ; from all questions between public and private claims ; from all the fatigue of intense thought, racking the brain to the verge

of madness, and all the remorse arising from unresisted temptation ; from all the ten thousand miseries of power, we, happy women, and doubly happy as Englishwomen, are providentially exempt. Protected by the laws, by custom, and the general sentiment of our country, we may, if we chuse it, live undisturbed in the possession of every earthly good. Public calamity must become personal suffering, it must pervade the recesses of our dwellings, before we, housed and sheltered as we are, in the hearts of our generous protectors, are exposed to it. The whole world might be at war, and yet not the rumor of it reach the ear of an Englishwoman—empires might be lost, and states overthrown, and still she might pursue the peaceful occupations of her home ; and her natural lord might change his governor at pleasure, and she feel neither change nor hardship.

And now, who would give up this peace, this security, this situation, so friendly

friendly to all the gentle virtues of the heart, and all the elegant powers of the mind, to make inroads into the hostile lands of public feud and political contest? Is there any thing so alluring in the exercise of the irascible passions? is there any thing so congenial to the female temper, in the methods adopted by the covetous of power, that we should barter all our joys to partake theirs? What do we see gained by such as are at present foremost in the contest? Endless anxiety is the portion of those in power: chagrin not to be alleviated is evident in those excluded from it.—Let us then leave the field of battle to them.

But peace, happiness, and the mild virtues, I might almost say every virtue, will depart our dwellings, if once we are instigated to take a part too active in the world; and the mental sufferings this change will superinduce, will far exceed those of the other sex; for, as it is im-

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possible

possible to give our minds the strength of their's, our's must sink where their's might remain firm ; as our feelings are more acute, our perceptions of evil will still more distressingly harass us ; and as we must, after all our efforts, be partially ignorant, all the misery of imperfect information, a misery that aggravates every danger, will distract us. Not knowing when we are safe, we shall not know what to fear ; and blinded by our passions, and misled by our prejudices, we shall be alternately elevated and depressed equally above and below the level of reason.

Too intimate an acquaintance with the world, can have no very soothing influence on the human mind. Those who know least of it, uniformly think the best of it ; and those who are engaged deeply in its cares, are forced to exclude from their thoughts many things better worth their consideration. When we women commence politicians, there
will

will be an end of one characteristic difference observable in the minds of the two sexes, I mean the superior influence of religion on that of females. We shall have the same necessities to plead ; we shall frame the same excuses for neglecting what can never be neglected innocently ; and we shall fancy, that while we are serving the state, according to our ideas, we are serving our Maker.

But this is fallacious reasoning. Our Maker never designed us for any thing but what he created us, a *subordinate* class of beings ; a sort of noun adjective of the human species, tending greatly to the perfection of that to which it is joined ; but incapable of sole-subsistence.

In this age of female heroism, I shall gain no credit by avowing myself inimical to the idea of female patriotism ; but in truth, I know no such virtue. A woman's country is, according to my conceptions, that which her protector chuses

for her ; and it is only such of us as enjoy the unenviable privilege of being wholly at our own disposal, that can boast without absurdity of their patriotism. We may entertain a tender regard for the soil that gave birth to our dearest connections ; we may think with a sigh of the scenes endeared to us in our youth ; but to prefer our country to all others, for this truly selfish reason, that we ourselves were born in it, is to adopt the conduct of some wives, now, perhaps, repenting their folly, who have too late perceived, that the interests of a husband are those which should regulate the affections of the wife.

It cannot be doubted that the privileges which this country allows the female sex, and the consequent comforts and enjoyments resulting from the consentaneous opinion of Englishmen in their favor, will excite as restless a spirit of envy and jealousy in the women of
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less-favored nations, as our public peace and prosperity has raised in the men. In France, notwithstanding all their boasted freedom and equality, women have suffered an irreparable, and a most barbarous degradation in the dissolution of the marriage union at pleasure. A few of the licentious may at first be pleased with this freak of liberty; but nine tenths of the Gallic ladies will soon be weary of it: they will perceive that they are disgraced: pride will restrain some, fear others, from owning that their adored system of anarchy could be in any point erroneous: they will look with a malignant eye on the respectable English wife, repaid for all her sacrifices and absurdities, by that most gratifying of all returns, the esteem and affection of a worthy man: they will compare their own unsettled state, the tyranny of their temporary masters, the subjection in which fear of change detains them-

selves, the precariousness of their lot, and its certain pejection (if I may be allowed the expression) as their attractions decline ; they will compare all this with our better fate ; and, unable to amend their own situation, they will, if we may trust experience, endeavor to lower us to their own standard. One art which they will certainly use, is that of exciting us, by their example, to take part in politics, in whatever can render us unamiable and ferocious. By this manœuvre, they will hope to lessen the mutual attachment subsisting between the sexes ; they will set us at variance amongst ourselves, and then their next step needs no prediction.

Whoever believes me in this statement of contingencies, which, I believe, is no more than common sense points out to every person of any reflection, will I trust join in my opinion that it behoves every woman, particularly at this crisis,

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to be extremely tenacious of the real feminine character, and to improve to the utmost by every honest means, that favorable disposition which Englishmen entertain towards us. Unless we are emulous of that infamous repudiation which, in its very permission, strikes at once at the root of all love, all faith, all honor, all delicacy, which leaves a woman a stigmatized character, and her children an equivocal birthright, we ought to do all in our power to oppose the admission of such a principle into the minds of our protectors. What woman with the common feelings of nature, be she ever so ignorant or ever so highly educated, would not revolt at the idea of being dismissed like Hagar, from the door of a man who had courted her with all the blandishments of love, and for whose sake she had torn herself from fond parents and a happy domestic society. The offspring of the outcast

Hagar was Ishmael—his hand was against every man's—and so will be the hand of all such subjects of dereliction.—The early cruelty of the world tends more than any thing to form a desperate character; and if the succeeding generation of Gauls do not cut one another's throats, it will be only because their fathers have taught them the folly of it.

It was thought before the dreadful confutation set forth in France, that there were some innate affections of the human heart, which like the first principles of geometry, were too evident to be proved, and which were resolvable solely into the immutable nature of things; but modern philosophy and that blessed hypothesis materialism, have undeceived us: there are now no social ties subsisting in human nature—the parental, the filial, the fraternal affections, love, friendship, gratitude, are all obsolete or vulgar prejudices, unworthy the regard or rather court-

courting eradication from the hand of every pupil of French liberty. Should the perversion of human judgment proceed a little farther, and God only knows where it will stop, we may expect to see public honors decreed to the wretch who shall be impious enough to lift his hand against his parent.

Such are the consequences of French speculation and refinement, that it is now become difficult to say, what is virtue, and what is vice, and equally a matter of uncertainty to find a test to which we may appeal. The Mosaic law we leave for the Jews; the Gospel is now to be rejected; the apostles cannot hope for more honor than their master, so that all our rule of life is at once annihilated. I suppose any democrat to whom this might be urged, would refer me for the supply of all these deficiencies to the decrees of the National Convention. But were their vigilance ever so great, had their

their foresight provided a remedy for every possibly existing evil, what credit could they gain with the world while their deeds are the most flagitious that ever disgraced any rabble?

There is, I suppose, in the mind of every one not entirely abandoned to vice and profligacy, a sort of reason in the feelings, a kind of appetite in the conscience that must be satisfied previous to any sober enjoyment. It is not our having all that this world can afford of its good things, it is not our living *ad libitum*, it is not our insuring the immediate gratification of any or of every wish, that will make a rational being happy, or even contented; we must live by rule; we must act up to what we think our duty, or peace of mind is not our's. No one convinced of this truth, would contend that a multiplication of duties is necessary to our happiness, or that to seek undefined virtue, is the shortest

shortest method to be virtuous. We are not only safest, but unless our own perverse wills torment us, we are happiest in a state of reasonable and well regulated subordination. Whoever will take the trouble of guiding us, deserves, but rarely meets with our gratitude. It is seldom till we have smarted for our temerity that we are prevailed on to be cautious.

It may be said, that while affairs so important as the fates of kings and empires interest the attention of the world, it is idle to demand any part of it for the minor duties of prudence or decorum, and that private opinions cannot be maintained in the universal clamor of public commotion; but this is sophistry. If we call ourselves free agents, our own will must be the propelling power to all our actions; and as the private judgment must regulate the individual will, it is every one's private
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opinion that must form the character. If, on the contrary, we give up the privilege of thinking for ourselves; if while we rave for liberty, we can be content to follow implicitly the dictates of imperious fashion, without once asking ourselves how far we are justified, we must renounce all pretensions to our boasted powers of discrimination, and bear patiently the insult with which our deluders will infallibly repay our credulity.

Could an inhabitant of a region unconnected with this terraqueous globe, behold what is now passing on it, and supposing him a creature endued but with uncorrupted human powers, what must he think of the wisdom of this world? With what astonishment and contempt must he view a people setting about a reformation of some few public grievances, by annihilating their own existence as a nation, and introducing

ducing all those calamities amongst themselves which the Almighty has reserved as his most direful punishments? When he sees one of the finest countries under the canopy of Heaven desolated by war, when he sees every blessing rejected and every curse preferred, what must he think of the sanity of that people? But what is their present situation to that into which a very short time must now plunge them, if they do not seek peace?—Whence are they to be subsisted? Where is the provision for the future year? Where is the land of Egypt to which they may go down to buy bread?

But should such an ærial spectator perceive that this horrible example of popular madness not only does not alarm the surrounding nations, but that some have followed, and others are with difficulty restrained from following it—should he cast his eye upon an island
abound-

abounding with all that human necessity asks, or human covetousness can grasp ; should he observe the inhabitants to be governed by wise laws and a virtuous magistrate, and to live in that medium which divides subjugation from licentiousness, must he not think these islanders mad, on any terms or for any improvement of their situation, to risk the forfeiture of blessings so invaluable ?—If such a being should look down on us, let him my, countrywomen, perceive, that whatever mad schemes may occupy the minds of *Frenchmen*, *Englishwomen* are still in their sober senses.

25th Jan. 1793.

THIS day all our hopes that it was impossible, however mad the French might be, that they should avow themselves *a nation of murderers*, are at an end !—Those strenuous advocates for free-

freedom, for justice, and for Gallic virtue, who pledged themselves for the integrity of their views, and a glorious issue to their proceedings, must now abandon the cause, or take upon themselves an opprobrium the honest mind shudders at.—Can there, out of France, be found a human being to vindicate the conduct of those who have *condemned* and *murdered* Louis the sixteenth? a man against whom nothing could be reasonably objected, but that his intellectual powers were limited, and that he was —a king! For *him* no one at all competent to judge of his previous sufferings, can now mourn—all who believe the existence of an all-directing Providence, must rejoice that his bloodthirsty persecutors have at length set this innocent object of their cruelty at liberty.—He is dismissed to that peace, (God forgive me if I say,) they can never know.—I wish only to hear, that all his miserable relatives have shared his fate, and

and I then shall wait with patience the vengeance of offended Heaven.

For the sake of justice, for the sake of innocence, for the sake of all mankind, may the European powers rise and crush these execrable wretches; but should the Almighty defeat our designs, still punishment, the most dreadful of all punishments, impends over guilty France. Let all their wishes be indulged; let them satiate their fury with blood; and let them be left to themselves.

Deserted by his kindred, opposed by every species of inhumanity, disgraced, insulted, and murdered; the unhappy Louis yet rises, and will ever rise to our remembrance, an object of pity and respect. The decencies refused him by his countrymen, shall be abundantly offered to him by British hearts—he has had our commiseration; he has our tears:—in the feelings excited by his miseries, we have forgotten that he was

once an enemy, that he was ever an alien, and that he was not a brother.

What an awful lesson does his fate hold out to us of the instability of human greatness, and the non-efficacy of supreme dignity, to shield any man from the greatest calamities of the lowest orders!—And, on the other hand, what inestimable consolation is offered to us, by that never-failing assurance interwoven with our very nature, that there is One who judges the world in righteousness, and who will reward every man according to his work.

FINIS.





